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EARLY HISTORY OF JACKSON COUNTY

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# *Early History of Jackson County*

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Hardships and Privations Endured and  
Encountered With the Indians  
by Pioneer Settlers.

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Reminiscences of David Sturgeon, an old Pioneer, Compiled  
by H. W. Chadwick as taken from The Banner Files  
of 1877 and Republished 1928. ✓

Letters of John H. Benton of Washington, D. C., Giving the  
Early History of Jackson County, as taken from  
The Banner Files of 1893.

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## *Early Jackson County History*

### **Emigrating to Indiana**

David Sturgeon, with his father, emigrated from Shelby county, Kentucky, to Indiana, in 1798, settled immediately on the banks of the Ohio river. Theirs was the first cabin erected in the neighborhood. The country was an unbroken wilderness not only for miles around, but over the entire North-West, which at that time was denominated the Great West. Now and then an enterprising pioneer, hunter or trapper had erected his rude cabin and perhaps cleared a patch as a beginning for a future home; but they were looked upon with distrust, and as an innovation on the rights of their territory by the tribes of Indians who had undisputed control of the country, and who were not only numerous but vigilant and watchful—ever on the alert to inflict punishment on those isolated settlers. Those tribes, though not positively on the war path, were nevertheless looked upon as dangerous neighbors, and the not unfrequent massacres of the settlers served to make them all not only watchful but suspicious of their Indian neighbors. For the first eight years' residence in Indiana, Mr. Sturgeon spent most of his time in assisting his father in opening the new farm and in the cultivation of the same, and in running flatboats to New Orleans and returning home on foot, most of the way through an unbroken forest inhabited by savages, who, though professing friendship, were thirsting for the blood of the whites. I have heard Mr. Sturgeon relate an incident which occurred to him and two traveling companions on one of their trips homeward, which he said was calculated to try the nerve of the most courageous frontiersman. And accustomed, as he said boatmen were, to perils of the most startling character from the river pirates and the Indians this was as severe a trial as he ever passed, and one which at the time not only required nerve, but all the executive ability possessed by those most intimately acquainted with Indiana habits. On passing New Madrid, Sturgeon and party learned that a boat's crew of four persons had passed on foot up the river to their home near the Falls



of the Ohio river, and from the description obtained they were convinced they were acquaintances and friends who had left New Orleans three days in advance of them, and were now less than a day's travel ahead. Their anxiety to overtake them was heightened from the fact that their trail for the next few days passed over a district of country occupied by bands of roving Indians, who, though not positively on the war path, were nevertheless restless and unsafe. The day was one of unusual severity. A cold drenching winter rain storm, with relentless fury beat upon them all day, which, in their anxiety to overtake their friends in advance, they heeded not. Their anxiety was heightened from the fact that they saw fresh tracks of Indians.

#### Indians or River Banditti

They would follow the trail for some distance and then leave it, returning again at some turn or angle of the same. These signs strongly impressed them with the fact that their friends were being followed by Indians or river banditti, who were as much to be dreaded as the former, and that their intentions were evil. The storm continued through the day with such intensity that when night overtook them they found they had not made over a half day's journey. Coming upon a cabin, erected perhaps by some trapper or hunter they determined to enter and spend the night. On entering they were presented with unmistakable evidence that the cabin was occupied, or that their friends had dined there during the day. A small pile of burning embers in the middle of the room, and a partially consumed venison ham suspended from a peg on the wall, were proofs sufficient as to the very recent occupancy of the hut by their friends, as they felt and believed. If so, they were but a short half day ahead. After renewing the fire and roasting the remainder of the venison ham which they consumed with a relish, they spread their blankets, barred the wide door, examined and put in order their trusty rifles, renewed the fire with a bountiful supply of fuel, and resigned themselves to rest.

#### Lone Indian Woman Hut

They awoke early in the morning fully refreshed. After partaking of a hearty meal of parched corn and jerked veni-

son, they prepared to resume their journey; and though the storm had rather increased and the wind and the rain had assumed the form of a hurricane, they resolved to push forward and overtake if possible the advancing party before nightfall. Some twenty miles ahead there lived alone in a rude bark cabin an aged Indian woman, whose bodily infirmities had long since deprived her from keeping pace with the warriors of her tribe, whose door was ever open to the trapper and returning boatsman, at whose hands she often received some trinket to amuse or present of value. Nothing occurred during the day to relieve the monotony occasioned from the incessant pelting of the storm. The low lands were one continuous stretch of water often from one to two feet deep, and the small streams and creeks were swollen to such proportions as to make the fording exceedingly hazardous; yet nothing daunted, they breasted every obstacle, determined if possible to make the cabin and overtake their friends. But not till darkness set in were their eyes gladdened by the light emanating from the lone Indian's hut. Hither with alacrity they bent their steps, and entered scarce waiting the welcome of the ancient dame. A fire was quickly lighted from some brush wood, around which they sat to warm and refresh themselves. The Indian seemed restless and reserved in her manners so much so as to excite suspicion, and Sturgeon, being acquainted, interrogated her as to her knowledge of his friends, the boatmen. Ere she had deigned a reply to his question, they were startled by whisperings and stealthy footsteps without, which to the practiced ear were ominous of evil. The woman's strange conduct and the noise without brought them all, rifle in hand, to their feet. To their surprise, as they arose, they saw suspended from a peg on the wall three fresh and bloody scalps, which evidently had but very recently been torn from wreaking victims. To bar the door and secure the scalps, which they believed to be those of their friends, was but the act of a moment.

#### The Besieged Party

The door of the cabin being securely closed, the besieged party, for such they really were, had a moment, and a moment only for reflection and consultation. The hardy pioneer of those days was not easily surprised or caught off his guard. Accustomed as he was to danger continually, he was

ever ready to defend himself against whatever foe presented itself, seeming to rejoice in the conflict most when the odds were against him and the chances of success were most doubtful.

A hasty survey of the premises convinced Sturgeon and party of the fact that whilst the hut they occupied was neither impregnable nor bullet proof, yet it was a considerable protection, and afforded them an opportunity to measure strength with at least twice their number. They looked each other in the face with that firm resolve which men in greatest danger only feel, examined and re-primed their trusty rifles, adjusted their tomahawks and knives, passed the welcome flask around, and with such resolves which men can make in silence pledged each other that come whatever might they at least would make their scalps worth taking.

In the meantime the party outside had withdrawn a short distance from the house, and were engaged in a consultation as to the means necessary to capture at the least hazard those within. They were, as Sturgeon learned from the old Indian woman, whom, in their haste to secure the door, had also been retained within a band consisting of five Indians and three white men disguised as Indians. She also informed them that the three bloody scalps upon the wall were none other than those of the boatmen, their friends, whom they had anticipated overtaking, and whom the Indians had killed, scalped and robbed but a short distance from her hut, and that the fourth party made his escape, but whether wounded or not she could not tell and that the Indians were also informed of their approach and had resolved on their capture and robbery.

To make the situation more perilous, the old Indian woman was wild with fear while she would have liked to defend Sturgeon and his comrades from the butchery of her tribe, she well knew that to give succor to the white man, or shield him from the tomahawk and scalping knife, was death to her. At this particular juncture the party without came close upon the cabin, surrounded the same, secreted themselves behind trees, and demanded of the old woman that she should eject the party from her house, or they would burn it over her head. Three or four of the party outside then attempted to force the door, but a well-directed bullet from one of the men

within made them fall back and take shelter behind the trees. Again for a short time all was still as the chamber of death, save the peltings of the storm and sobbings of the Indian woman.

### Carnival of Death

It was evident now that something had to be done to rid themselves of this embarrassment, and eject, if possible, the old woman from the hut. To accomplish this was no easy task. To unbar and open the door was but to invite the bloodthirsty savages to enter into the carnival of death. The only other means of exit was through a small opening near the center of the roof, which served to let the smoke out, and this was peculiarly hazardous, for in the darkness the Indians could not distinguish a form sufficiently to tell friend from foe, and they, hearing her footsteps upon the roof, were liable to shoot and kill her. Yet this was deemed the only feasible means of exit, and through it the old woman determined to escape.

The plan was for her to be assisted to the roof, and then to announce to the Indians that if they would remain as they were she would descend to them. This having been done all was quiet for a moment, until the old woman descended from the roof, when all of sudden, as if anticipating such an event, the whole party, impelled by a spirit incarnate, came yelling at the top of their voices and some of them mounted to the top of the cabin, evidently intending to descend through the hole in the roof.

A moment's reflection convinced them that this mode of entrance was exceedingly hazardous, for as but one at a time could descend through the opening, the men within could dispatch them as they entered. But the mounting of the roof by part of the besiegers was only a ruse to draw the fire from the three heroic men within, who now looked upon the struggle as one of life and death, and attract their attention exclusively to that point, while the remainder of the band made a simultaneous and vigorous attack on the door. In this the brave little party were not taken by surprise. They were accustomed to the treachery and cunning of the Indians, and thus self-guarded they were on the alert and protested every conceivable point of attack with the greatest bravery and care.



### Indians Suffer Defeat

After the Indians had spent some time endeavoring vainly to get the party within to discharge their guns, they made a bold and rapid attack on the door and roof at the same time, accompanying it with the wildest yells. In their united efforts they partially forced the door from its fastenings, and for a moment it seemed as if no power could prevent them from entering. At the same moment two rifles were thrust through the opening in the roof and discharged, but the darkness was so great that they could not take aim, and no damage resulted from the shooting.

But the light from the rifle on the roof when discharged served as a mark for one of the parties within, who was guarding that point and quick as thought he discharged his rifle. To the great joy of the three, a heavy groan, accompanied with the fall of the person from the roof, told very plainly that the leaden messenger had done its work. At the same instant the two guarding the door fired through the small opening made by the Indians, which evidently either killed or wounded some of them, for they beat a hastily retreat, and from every indication must have suffered the loss of at least three of their number in killed or wounded. This gave the little band a moment to consult, reload their faithful rifles, and secure more permanently the door. This having been done, each partook of a small draught from the ever welcome flask to brace the nerves and quicken action.

After this they spread themselves flat upon the ground of the cabin, to guard, to watch and to wait.

It was some time before the Indians returned, but when they did come they came with such stealth that it was hard to distinguish their presence. All of a sudden they attacked and forced the door, and a hand to hand struggle ensued. The little party discharged their rifles with telling effect, and then clubbed their assailants with the same with such undaunted courage as to again put them to flight. Again they carried off a wounded or dead man. So far but one of Sturgeon's party had received a wound, and it was but a slight flesh one.

It was now the grey of the morning. The heavy storm which had lasted nearly three days had abated and the dark clouds, spent of their fury were broken in fragments and

and being scattered to give place to the god of day. The sun had mounted far above the tops of the trees ere our little band of three brave souls quitted their prison to renew their journey. With greatest caution they took in all the surroundings, knowing the foe would lie in ambush for them, to seek revenge for the night's defeat.

#### The Journey Homeward

The party, after leaving the cabin, pursued their journey with great caution, for they well knew that unless the Indians had suffered much worse in the night's encounter than they had reason to believe they had the savages would lay in ambush to obtain revenge for the night's defeat, which resulted as near as was ascertained, in the wounding of three or four of their number—perhaps two mortally, if not killed outright. To keep the direct and beaten trail, whose turns and angles they knew so well, or to strike out through a dense wilderness with no compass to guide save an instinctive knowledge of the chart and landmarks of nature so well understood by the pioneer, was a matter of importance to be considered and determined upon in the most careful and philosophical manner. Sturgeon knew well enough that he at least was well known to the Indians through the old Indian woman, and if they proposed to renew the attack they would lie in wait for them on the beaten trail. To leave the trail was not only to court danger from wandering tribes of which the country was full, but would be throwing themselves at the mercy of the enemy in their own country.

They scorned to give up bleared pathway through the forest, which they knew led to the door of their humble cabin on the banks of the beautiful Ohio, because, perchance, some lurking savages lay in ambush for them on the way. No—they knew no fear. They were ready to meet the foe. They had joy in the strife. Thus decided they pushed forward with such caution as those accustomed to danger every moment can exercise.

But what seemed most strange was that as the morning wore away no sign of the Indian trail was seen. Could it be possible they had been so completely defeated as to give up the conflict, or had they gone to some neighboring tribe or party to tell the story of their disaster and solicit aid. Time

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wore on. The sun had mounted the altitude of the south, and the "weary traveler" began to look for some quiet and secure retreat in which to prepare refreshments for the noon's repast. The fear, anxiety and excitement of the night and morning had worn all, and the cravings of an overfasted appetite, accompanied with some physical exhaustion, began to assert their right and demand consideration.

To obtain some food was the next consideration, as the supply of jerked venison and parched corn had been exhausted. They determined to leave the path at right angles for a short distance, to see if they could not kill a bear or deer from which to make the noon's meal. They had gone but a short distance from the direct route, when from the depth of a valley, surrounded by beautiful hills came up a curling smoke from the fire of some friend or foe.

### Friend or Foe

There was nothing to indicate the occupancy of the valley. No path seemed to lead to the camp, if such it was. No indications of human footprints could be seen —nothing to indicate that aught was there save the one clear blue column of smoke emanating from the valley below. Just as they were consulting as to the probable occupants of the valley, a beautiful doe came bounding along, and paused not more than one hundred yards in front of the party and began browsing the twigs of the young cane. Quick as thought came from Sturgeon's rifle its report, and the doe was prostrate on the ground. The act was instantaneous and a surprise to all, for they deemed themselves perhaps near the camp of the enemy. For a moment all was quite, and the party were on the alert. They fancied they heard in the direction of the camp-fire footsteps approaching them, and each one took a tree for safety, after the manner of those days, when to their surprise they beheld nothing daunted, approaching from the valley, the old Indian woman, who occupied the cabin of the previous night's encounter.

She made her way to the fallen deer, and helped herself to the choice of the same, when Sturgeon determined to quit his ambush and interview her. He learned from her that, as he and his party had anticipated, two of the Indians had been killed in the night's fray, and one of the Indians and one of

the river bandits were badly wounded—that the wounded had been taken into camp some miles distant—and that one of the Indians and one of the bandits had followed on the track of the remaining boatmen of the previous day's massacre. She stated that her camp was occupied only by herself to the hospitalities of which they were welcome. They repaired to her hut, and partook of a simple meal of roast venison.

After dinner the refreshed party pushed forward in hope of overtaking either their friend, the boatsman, or the Indians whom they knew to be in pursuit. The evening wore on, and nothing presented itself to surprise or alarm, save for last two miles or so two footprints—one Indian and one white, (the pioneer could distinguish the difference in the same)—were visible. Yet they pressed on, and just before sunset, as they were preparing a raft to cross a stream which was full to swimming, they heard an exclamation from the other bank, and looking in the direction they beheld a man sheltered behind a tree, apparently from some near foe. A moment's observation revealed his form behind a neighboring tree. There was a sharp crack of a rifle, a blue curl of smoke, one bound of an Indian, and the comrade came forth relieved from the hiding place, rescued from the jaws of death, to join his friends. His story was that he had been pursued by two parties, one of whom he shot, and then took to a tree to escape the other, and that he and the Indian had been skirmishing for four hours, each afraid to quit his tree.

A few days brought them home. The little cabin on the banks of the Ohio was still there, with father and mother to welcome the returning son. But they had many a tale of horror to relate. The Indians had grown more hostile. The campfire had been lighted, and many a settler's family had been butchered and many a lonely cabin consumed to light the midnight hour. The war drum was beating at Corydon, Captain Bigger was calling for volunteers, and thither Surgeon, with rifle in hand, repaired the following day.

### Joining the Rangers

The dreadful massacre by the Indians of citizens at the Pigeon Roost, in Clark county, the many depredations committed by them near Vincennes, Fort Wayne and on the line of settlements bordering the Wabash, greatly aroused and



incensed the whites and called for immediate action. The shrill whistle of the fife and the beat of the drum, calling to arms for the defense of their countrymen, was answered by many a gray-haired sire and many a youthful pioneer. Capt. Biggers, at Corydon, was organizing a company of rangers to scour the country from New Albany to the Wabash and punish the roving bands of Indians, whose depredations and murders were a terror to the isolated settlers of the frontier. At the beat of the drum David Sturgeon, clad in buckskin breeches, hunting shirt and moccasins, rifle in hand put in his appearance and demanded to be enrolled as a soldier. Young, tall and sinewy, he was the embodiment of manly strength and beauty. The young captain at once saw in the new recruit of the company an acquisition most desirable.

The organization of the company having been completed, each member mounted his own steed, with such provisos of dried meat and corn meal as they could carry, and with powder horn and shot pouch well supplied with ammunition, they bade their friends a hasty good-bye and passed into the forest in pursuit of their foe. The first trip made was to Vincennes. A few settlers had erected their cabins in the wilderness extending from the Ohio west to the Wabash, and the smoke of their burning cabins and shrieks of the massacred children, gave nightly attestations of the murderous deeds of the Indians and their determination to exterminate the whites. Tecumseh and his brother, the prophet, were busy amongst the various tribes of the west inciting them to open hostilities and while they did not propose to bring on an immediate conflict of arms with the general government, they nevertheless intended by the numerous murders committed to either intimidate the lonely settlers of the forest and compel them to abandon their homes and return to the east or else make the attack on the Indians, thus giving them (the Indians) an excuse for a violation of the treaty by which they were bound. But each humble cabin in the wilderness was a fort and an arsenal, and the savages too often found that those isolated houses cost dearly to the invader—that the stalwart backwoodsman and his wife, when once barricaded within their log hut, were almost invincible, and at all times able to defend themselves, if not taken by surprise, against thrice their number.

### More Footprints of Indians

The second day of their travels, when, as Mr. Sturgeon thought, they were in the southwestern part of Washington county, or perhaps the edge of Orange, they came upon the footprints of some Indians. The tracks were fresh, and they were traveling in the same direction with the Rangers. A consultation was held, and it was decided to send two or three parties ahead as skirmishers. Accordingly a volunteer corps of three was called for, and Mr. Sturgeon and two others stepped forward and signified their readiness to accept the position. Their instructions were to follow cautiously the trail of the Indians so long at least as they pursued the direction that they were then traveling and the main column of twenty-two men with horses would remain some distance behind. They dismounted reprimed their rifles, divested themselves of all superfluous baggage, and started in pursuit of the Indians. After traveling a short distance they came to where the Indians had evidently held a council. They had stood in a circle close together facing each other, and when they started on the march they had dropped in line and marched as one man, the rear party stepping in the tracks of the front one, so as to indicate that but one person had passed. This to the practiced eye was indicative of the fact that the Indians were in pursuit of some object to be taken by surprise. Some humble pioneer perhaps was to be unexpectedly surprised and murdered and his cabin burned over the heads of his frantic wife and children, or, worse, to be carried into a wretched and cruel captivity, worse than death. They had not traveled far until they came in view of a clearing of perhaps four or five acres, with a small but strongly built log cabin at the opposite side. The Indians had passed to the right under cover of the weeds. Smoke was issuing from the chimney, showing the house to be occupied, and freshly chopped trees just fallen were burning on the ground.

### Father and Son Found Massacred—Three Dead Indians

It was near sunset, and they were anxious to reconnoitre the cabin and its inmates. To accomplish which they agreed to approach from the side opposite from where the Indians had probably gone. They advanced cautiously, keeping themselves concealed as much as possible by standing trees. They

had traveled but a short distance when they came across the knit cap of a small boy and judging from his tracks he had been running. In a few steps more, in a small ravine, they came upon his lifeless body, pierced with a rifle ball, and freshly scalped.

The next thing was to make a bold dash for the house, which was about fifty steps more in advance, and the door on the opposite side from them. To cover the distance occupied but a moment, and they were at the door. There at the door lay three Indians and a white man, (the white man scalped). Quick as a flash came from opposite directions reports of three or four rifles, and one of their number fell mortally wounded. A fierce yell of the savages revealed their hiding place, and with drawn tomahawks four braves came rushing upon the two brave scouts. Sturgeon and his comrades emptied their rifles, and two Indians bounded in the air and their race was done.

#### Lone Cabin in Wilderness

The killing of the Indians was a sufficient warning to the remainder of the squad. True, they made some little show of attack, and again secreted themselves behind trees to re-load. This gave Sturgeon and his friend a moment's opportunity to enter the house, bearing to a place of comparative safety their wounded companion. Thus secured they felt able to defend themselves, with the aid of the heroic and brave woman against any and all odds the Indians could bring against them. The firing had been heard by the remainder of the company who were but a short distance behind, and they came in great haste to the relief of their comrades. The Indians at once took in the situation, and began a hasty retreat. A few shots were fired after them without effect, which at once convinced them that safety was alone to be had in flight, and they used exertion and stratagem so well understood by them as not only to escape unharmed, but to draw after them in ambush some of their pursuers, whom they hoped to kill and scalp. The shades of night were fast coming on, making the chances of pursuit extremely hazardous, and the chance of capture doubtful; yet a few brave men dashed heroically after them, determined to bring to punishment the murderers of the settler and perhaps their comrade also. The Indians being hotly pursued, made for the river bank, and began to scatter

to obtain some advantage of their pursuers; but the soldiers pressed them to the stream, and in spite of the darkness a few shots were exchanged, and one Indian was seen to sink beneath the waves and not appear again and one was wounded on the opposite bank and assisted away by his companions. The loss to the Rangers was the serious wounding of one horse, which had to be killed the following day. The company returned to the settler's cabin and camped for the night. It was at once evident that the wound of their comrade left at the cabin was mortal. He was shot through the chest, just under the arms, from right to left, puncturing the lungs and perhaps severing some large artery, for Mr. Sturgeon said that he never saw anything bleed equal to him. Every exertion was used to give relief, but long ere morning death drove away the darkness of the night. His last battle was fought. The weary and exhausted frame yielded to the decree of fate. The spirit was born from that lonely cabin in the wilderness on the wings of love and mercy to habitations of rest.

#### Attack Upon Settler, Wife and Son

The Indians had come upon and surprised the settler and his little boy in the clearing, killing the little fellow but a few yards from where he was first surprised. The father received a severe wound, which so disabled him that he was overtaken by several Indians when just at his own door, through which he had not sufficient time to enter. There brought to bay, his faithful wife came to his rescue with gun and ax, and though his life was sacrificed, the conquest was a dear one to the Indians, for at the discharge of his rifle one fell and a blow from the ax of the wife brought down a second. Then a hand to hand struggle ensued, in which he perished, yet not alone, for two more savages shared the fate of war. Amid the din and confusion the wife and mother regained the house. The next morning, the sun opened the day and the birds caroled sweetly in the deep forest shade, ere the little squad of Rangers resumed their journey. They had an office to perform of charity to a fallen barbarous and bloody foe, and one of duty and affection to a comrade and countryman. There in that lonely cabin in the wilderness, in repose of death slept the scalped father and son, and by their side slept in death also the brave, the gallant soldier, who had



imperiled and sacrificed his life to avenge the blood of his countrymen. Those three, side by side, were but a faint shadow of the bloody ravages and carnival of death delighted in by the savages. The disconsolate mother and bereaved wife, clasping to her bosom an only child of some two years of age, with disheveled hair, bloodshot eyes and bleeding heart, sat weeping over the dead. Her's indeed was a lot of sorrow in the bosom of the great wilderness, several miles from a single habitation, with no relatives or friends near to comfort and defend her, and surrounded by a bloodthirsty race of savages, whose hearts only rejoiced at the wail of the widow and the scream of the orphan.

In the midst of a band of savages, who had in cold blood but just murdered the father and son, it was no wonder she wept. It was decided to bury the soldier the pioneer and his son in one grave in the clearing, and gather up and pack the effects of the widow and convey her to a place of safety. The morning hour was spent in hollowing deep and wide a new-made grave and making the other necessary preparations to deposit in the silent earth the dead. About the noon of day, with reversed arms, muffled drum and saddened hearts they brought out the dead, and with uncovered heads consigned them coffinless to the earth. The captain spoke to the heart-broken widow such words of cheer as his lips could give utterance to; but of what avail were words of comfort to her. Her heart was in that grave with murdered husband and child and like one of old she refused to be comforted because they were not. Some pious comrade offered a simple but fervent prayer to the Father of Light. Then they looked into the face of the dead, and consigned them to the mother earth.

They closed up the grave, piled a log-heap on it, set it on fire to remove every mark of the grave, and then started on their march. At the close of the next day they left the widow in a place of safety. After two or three days' march they arrived at Vincennes, which was then the seat of Territorial Government and the headquarters of General Harrison.

#### Ordered to Report at Vallonia

After resting a few days at Vincennes, the Rangers were ordered to report at Vallonia, in Jackson county, Indiana. The Indians were troublesome and general terror to the few

settlers of the county, stealing horses and carrying off property of every character and threatening the lives of the citizens. They were ordered to Vallonia by a more northern route than that traveled in going to Vincennes, that they might give some aid, if necessary, to a few settlers on that line of travel, and also act as a warning to the bands of Indians who were committing depredations upon them. The journey was long, irksome and perilous. There were no traveled roads, but an unbroken wilderness, with streams swollen from the spring rains often overflowing their banks to such an extent as to render fording extremely dangerous, and often causing delays for a day or two. No Indians were met with, or their trail discovered for several days, and the march became monotonous, for those early settlers were so accustomed to danger that a few days of quiet wore upon them, and they began to wish for some exercise more exciting—some encounter with the foe, for instance. They were anxious and willing at any moment to measure strength and skill with the most adroit savages, and for this purpose they would separate themselves in bands of three or four, and take for a day different lines of march, or scour the country at right angles for miles, meeting at night at the common camp, and if one squad failed to report they were waited for and looked after the next day until found.

#### Victims of Tomahawk and Scalping Knife

On one of these diverging excursions, Sturgeon and party came across the remains of two cabins which had just been burned. They had been built close together in the short bend of a beautiful creek, with high and rocky banks, as a protection against the savages. But it was of no avail. They had fallen victims to the tomahawk and scalping knife, and naught remained to tell that it had so recently been the abode of human life save the still smoking ruins of the consumed cabins and the burnt and charred forms of the murdered inmates. In all seven had fed the funeral pile to satisfy the Indian's thirst for blood. Neither age nor sex was exempt from his butcheries. The gray-headed man, the aged matron, the blooming maid, and the tender infant, shared with the athletic warrior the inevitable fate. The murderous band had gone in a western direction and from their tracks it appeared as if there were ten or a dozen. Sturgeon and his comrades

noticed that the trail they were on was bleared, indicating that a settler or small settlement was ahead, and they determined, if possible, to overtake and punish the savages before nightfall. They had not traveled far, when the sharp crack of two or three rifles broke the stillness of the solitude, and told too plainly that the foe was near. Without fear of harm, because they feared no danger, they pushed on a short distance, and came in sight of a strong log building, built after the manner of the forts of those days. As they came at full speed in full view, the Indians, about a dozen in number, made a precipitate flight for the forest, leaving in front of the fort one killed and one wounded.

#### One Killed and One Wounded

There were only two families and an old trapper occupying the place, together with a lad of some fourteen years, who had escaped from one of the two cabins burned in the morning. Mr. Sturgeon said that when they went to view the dead and wounded Indians, accompanied by the flaxen-haired boy, whose parents and friends had been so recently murdered and burned and witnessed the little fellow's agony as he beheld those savages and the bold and defiant look of the wounded one in the hands of his captors, he felt like arming the little fellow with gun and knife and directing him to dispatch the Indian. But that sympathy for a fallen foe, (no odds how barbarous,) that natural impulse of humanity so characteristic of civilization, prevailed, and they lifted his dark form from the ground where it had fallen and bore him inside the fort, where he received such attention as could be given. But his wound was fatal, and in a few hours he expired, without a moan, without a sigh; with no expression of sorrow upon his countenance for butcheries committed upon the human race. He entered the presence of the Great Spirit crimsoned with the blood of innocent babes and hoary-headed men.

They spent the night at the little fort, and returned to the place of rendezvous in the morning, where they met their comrades and related their adventures. Capt. Biggers did not deem it advisable to abandon the little garrison to its fate so soon, for he knew full well that the Indians would more than likely return and massacre the inmates. He therefore determined to remain a few days as a protection to the inhabitants. But the Indians were no doubt apprised of their step

and left, for diligent search was made for them without avail. After a few days' stay, they again resumed their march, accompanied by the little boy named, who remained with the Captain through the entire war, and after traveling a few days with no incidents worth relating, they appeared at Ketchem's fort, near Brownstown in Jackson county, Ind., and found the little settlements near Brownstown, Rockford and Vallonia, in a state of fear and excitement, menaced on every hand by a hostile foe.

#### Forts at Brownstown and Vallonia

At the time the Rangers made their appearance at the line of forts connecting the settlements of that which is now Brownstown and Vallonia, the Indians had become so troublesome as to compel the settlers to leave their homes and growing crops, and seek safety in the forts. And, indeed, the Indians held those places, as it were, in siege. They were numerous and warlike, often approaching within rifle range of the forts and driving off and killing stock. Hogs were killed indiscriminately, and horses stolen to such an extent as to compel settlers to prepare quarters for them either inside the forts, or in the immediate vicinity, for their safety. It was no wonder that those cooped-up, affrighted and half-famished settlers hailed with rejoicing the advent of the squad of Rangers, and felt that with the new acquisition to their numbers they would be enabled not only to successfully defend themselves and property from the depredations of their dusky foe, but could play the role of the offensive and rid the neighborhood of their presence. They were men and women in those forts in whose hands the rifle and hunting knife were no useless burden. They were men who, from their infancy up had been inured to the toils, hardships and dangers of a pioneer life—whose homes had been in the forest far in advance of civilization, in the very presence of the enemy and under the fire of his gun, until they had become familiar with danger and the companion of toil.

#### The Early Settlers

There were the Ketcham's, the Berry's the Stanton's and others, whose families are not now represented in the neighborhood. The older members of those families have long



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### The Early Settlers

There were the Ketcham's, the Berry's the Stanton's and others, whose families are not now represented in the neighborhood. The older members of those families have long

since been numbered with the dead, and their representatives have removed to other parts. There was also James Hutchinson, father-in-law of David Sturgeon, who, with his family, removed from Bullitt county, Kentucky, in the fall of 1809, and settled on the farm now owned by Christian Doerr, two miles southwest of Brownstown. On his farm stood one of the old forts (Hutchinson's). A few of the descendants still linger in the neighborhood. There was Jesse Durham, father of Harrison Durham, now living at Vallonia. He had just moved from Kentucky, and was living on the farm now owned by Col. Samuel T. Wells in 1811. His son Ewing, who was sheriff of Jackson county in 1840-41 during which time James Sumner was hung for the murder of his wife, was born in the fort at Vallonia, and was said to be the firstborn male child in Jackson county.

I stood at the grave of Jesse Durham, not long since in the burying ground at Vallonia, and saw that he died in 1850, at the age of 62 years. But few of his family remain to enjoy the fruits of his early labors. The Reaper's sickle has been gathering them in, and they have gone to join the father and mother beyond the cold river. There were two of the Beems—old Ranger Mike and his brother, Dick. I remember Ranger Mike well as he was when I was quite a young man. He was then well stricken in years, but not infirm. Time had wrought few wrinkles on his brow and to me he was the embodiment of manly strength and beauty—tall, strong and sinewy. He was just the kind of man which my youth's fancy imagined the pioneer should be. Long since he slept in his grave on Highten's hill. Quite a number of his sons and one daughter still live in the full enjoyment of that Government which the father in his youth helped so much to defend and maintain. There was also Abraham Miller, the father of Frederick, Isaac, Thomas, and Perry, (so well known here in an early day, now all deceased.) and Andrew Jackson, now of Vallonia. In early life I heard it said of Abraham Miller that he was "the honest man"—ever up-right in all his dealings with men and harmless and inoffensive. Who among the old settlers of Brownstown does not remember the old man, when, bowed with the weight of more than seventy-five years, mounted on his old gray horse, he paid his weekly visits to Brownstown to dispose of his marketing. But no one I presume ever saw Abraham Miller in a grogshop. He had

a daughter, Cinderella, now Mrs. Snyder, who was born in the fort at Vallonia in 1811. He died at the advanced age of 82 years, and rests among his friends in the cemetery at Brownstown. There, with some others the names of whom perhaps were never given the writer, were the band of patriots, who far in advance of civilization, came out and began a settlement in the deep forest, tenanted by wild beasts and wild and savage men.

I need not add that at the time of which I am writing—1811—there were perhaps not seventy-five acres of cleared land in Jackson county—not a mill—not a church—not a school house—not a road nor public way of travel—not a pound of salt only as the pioneers carried it from some salt works in Kentucky on horseback—and not a peck of meal only as was beaten or ground on hand mills. Not a newspaper entered the territory, strange as it may seem to us. Surrounded as we are by all the comforts, accomplishments and conveniences of this advanced age of civilization, we fail to realize and appreciate the sacrifices those men made for us.

But excuse this digression. I did not intend to write history.

#### **The Attack in the Pumpkin Patch—Killing of Buskirk**

For a short time after the arrival of the Rangers at the forts named near Brownstown and Vallonia the Indians withdrew from the immediate vicinity of the same, and relieved for a time the fears and anxieties of the people. Some of them began to make preparations for returning home to prepare for winter. They dreaded the idea of being cooped up in the forts during the long winter with their families and stock, and they hailed with delight the apparent withdrawal of the savages. But the rejoicing was of short duration. An incident occurred in the latter part of October which convinced the settlers that their safety was in the forts—that the withdrawal of the Indians was only temporary, and had been used as a ruse to allay the fears of the whites, so that they might obtain advantage of and murder them. A party of two persons went out from Hutchinson's fort a short distance with a four-horse team to a corn and pumpkin patch to get a load of pumpkins. When in the field loading, they were surprised

and fired on by the Indians, and one man, a Mr. Buskirk, was killed and scalped.

The other party, whose name I do not remember of hearing, escaped and gained the fort, though hotly pursued and often shot at by the Indians. The inmates of the fort, upon hearing the fate of Buskirk, and knowing the Indians were bent on stealing the horses, without a moment's delay armed themselves and started in pursuit of them. The Indians in the meantime attempted to get away with the horses, but were foiled in this by the prompt arrival of the citizens and soldiers, and were compelled to seek safety in flight. They were pursued in a western direction until they crossed the river some two miles distant. Night was now approaching, and a cold rain had set in, and the party deemed it advisable to abandon the pursuit for the present and return to the fort for the night.

#### Robert Sturgeon and a Man Named Zinck Next Victims

In the meantime a detail had carried Buskirk to the fort, which at the time was defended only by the woman and one man, Hobert Sturgeon, uncle of David Sturgeon. Sturgeon, upon beholding the lifeless form and mangled scalp of Buskirk, stroked the bloody head and exclaimed, "Oh, God, will this be my fate!" Little did he realize how near he stood to the dark chamber of death, at the hand of the same foe. The next day Buskirk was buried near Brownstown, in a burying ground which had been established near Ketcham's fort. After the burial, the party all left for Hutchinson's fort except Robert Sturgeon. He tarried for a time at Ketcham's fort and was drinking. Late in the evening he started to the Vallonia fort, to which he was attached. When at the foot of the hill now known as the Fislar hill, at the Half Mile branch at Vallonia, he was waylaid and shot by the Indians, who, perhaps, fearing that others were just behind, left him without scalping. The firing of the guns and arrival of Sturgeon's horse at the fort, alarmed the inmates, and convinced them that Sturgeon was killed.

It was near sunset. Jesse Durham, Captain of the citizens' force, called for volunteers to go and bring Sturgeon in, and seven brave men immediately came forward, determined to bring his body to the fort, or perish in the attempt. The wo-



men of the fort refused to let Durham go, desiring him to remain and assist them in the defense of the fort, in the event the Indians should make an attack. But the other seven went among whom were two of the Beems, Adam Miller, Thomas Ewing, father of Samuel and Columbus, Joseph Brighton and two others whose names were not given, and brought him to the fort. That night the Indians stole several horses, among the rest David Sturgeon's, and made off with them in the direction of Indianapolis. All was excitement and confusion. Two of their comrades, one a citizen and the other a Ranger, in as many days, had fallen victims to the rifle and scalping knife, and on the same evening that Sturgeon was killed another party of two or three citizens were fired on in a corn patch near Vallonia though they escaped unharmed and made the fort. Men and women alike armed themselves for a combat which they deemed inevitable, and through the long hours of the night, with beating hearts, they waited the approach of the enemy.

The next morning a detail of Rangers, under Captain Bigger, started in pursuit of the Indians, determined to punish them and recover the stolen property. When near the Haw Patch, perhaps in Bartholomew county, they overtook and had a skirmish with them, in which two Indians were killed and one white man, by the name of Zinck, mortally wounded. Four men were detailed to convey Zinck to Hutchinson's fort. After a weary march of some four or five days, as he was being borne upon stretchers by faithful friends, he died on Fislar's hill not far from the place where Sturgeon was killed. At nightfall they placed his lifeless form before his weeping friends in the fort. The next day they buried him beside his two comrades, Sturgeon and Buskirk. To this day their graves are unmarked and no man knoweth the exact spot of their sepulchre. Perhaps the plowshare has been guided among their bones. But He who numbers the hairs of our head and marks the sparrow's fall, in His good time will gather up those crushed and mouldering skeletons, (now neglected by their countrymen,) and clothe them with immortality and eternal life. After a few days' pursuit of the Indians, they scattered, and, the rainy season having set in, the remainder of the company returned to prepare for the approaching winter and guard the settlers while they could gather in their little crops.

### Ordered to Main Army

On arriving at Vallonia fort, Captain Bigger was ordered to join as quickly as possible the army commanded by General Harrison, then on its way to break up the Indian camps at or near Tippecanoe. It was evident from the large force gathering there that raids were contemplated on the feeble settlements on the frontier, and unless they were checked immediately those settlements would be blotted out and the inhabitants massacred before the opening of the spring. This order cast another shade of gloom over the inmates of the forts, who had become inspired with the hope that the Indians had withdrawn from the neighborhood after the massacre of Buskirk and Sturgeon, and would not return to do them harm, at least not during the winter, and leave them to return to their homes to spend the winter in improving the same. On the receipt of this intelligence they abandoned the hope of leaving the immediate vicinity of the forts, and went to work to strengthen their stockades and place themselves on a more secure footing, in case of an attack from the savages, which now seemed to threaten them at no distant day. To render their situation more comfortable, several persons had erected small houses in close proximity to the fort, and others proceeded to do so. At the setting in of the winter of 1811, some seventeen families were living at Vallonia. Winter approaching, their crops ungathered, short of provisions the company of Rangers whom they had learned to look to for security ordered immediately to march to the front, all had a tendency to dishearten them. The nearest mill where corn could be ground was below Charlestown, in Clark county, on the Ohio river, and the nearest point where salt could be obtained was some distance below Louisville, in Kentucky. I have heard those old people tell of salting or curing their meats—venison and bear—with hickory ashes, by covering the meat thoroughly with them. To make meal they used the gritter, a piece of perforated tin, but when the corn became dry the mortar and pestal were brought into requisition. The meal, coarse and unsifted, was kneaded and baked on a board before the fire in what was called hoe or Johnny cake. The game from the forest, the bread thus prepared, the turnip, potato and pumpkin patches, furnished their wholesome fare. Children were not overfed on pastries, sweetmeats and candies. Neither were their grown up brothers and sisters effeminate

and dyspeptic from an over-indulgence in soda biscuits, sweet-cakes and mincemeat pies.

The long nights were often spent by the men all congregating together in the fort, and some singing songs peculiar to their times, some telling stories of the chase and fight and of the perils and hardships endured by them, while some would engage in the social, yet harmless, dance, for they had not yet learned that the bow and fiddle were corrupting in their tendencies and was full of mischief. And often they would all join in a conversation of home and the friends left behind, and the young wife and mother, and wondered if they still lived, for no mail carrier came to Vallonia then with tidings of joy or sorrow. Before separating for the night, they would take each other kindly by the hand, and wish each and all a hearty goodnight. There was none of that narrow sentimentality of modern times (called refinement) with them. Common danger inspired them with common interests and made them friends in whom there was no guile. The sick man's bed was not unattended. Matrons and maidens alike brought some token of respect or some word of cheer to comfort, and children learned to reverence age, and for hours would sit delighted and listen to words of wisdom.

#### The Battle of Tippecanoe

The messenger from General Harrison was late in arriving with the intelligence at Vallonia ordering the company under Captain Bigger to join the main army at a designated point on the march for the Indian camp. The absence of all roads made the march laborious and slow. The company had started, and when near where Indianapolis now is, were met by a second messenger, bidding them return, as the battle of Tippecanoe had been fought and the Indians defeated and routed after one of the most sanguinary conflicts in savage warfare. Weary and worn by the march, the company halted for a few days to rest and refresh themselves. A day or two after halting, a party of five or six were out from camp some distance hunting, when they were surprised by a band of Indians and fired upon, resulting in two men, one named Duhme and the other David Hays, killed and scalped.

The remainder of the party made the camp and gave the alarm for the men to get in readiness to guard against an attack of the enemy which was contemplated. Before reaching

the camp, as Mr. Sturgeon informed me, the horse of one of the party caught one of his feet in the roots of a tree, the ground being wet and muddy and in his struggle to free himself pulled a hoof off, which entirely disabled him. The rest of the party not noticing the accident, continued their flight, leaving him (Sturgeon) and the owner of the horse. In an instant he relieved the horse of the saddle and hung it to a limb on a tree, and bade the man mount with him and seek the camp. The man was crying like a child, and refused to go. The first thought was to abandon and leave him to his fate, yet this he could not do. To leave a comrade to be tomahawked by the enemy would never do, and after persuading him for a few moments to no avail, and feeling that only safety was in immediate flight, he determined, as the case was desperate, to use a desperate remedy. So he cut him a good limb and bade the party to march. He refused, whereupon Sturgeon gave him a vigorous application of it. Some five or six stripes, accompanied by a sharp report of a rifle in the hands of some savages who had come in sight, put his legs to going, and he went into camp on double-quick.

(Note—I am reminded from my notes that Abraham, not Adam, Miller assisted to bring Sturgeon into the fort at Vallonia after he was shot by the Indians, and that Catherine Lockman, daughter of Abraham Miller, and not Mrs. Snyder as stated in a former article, was the first female child born in the fort and claimed to be the first in the county in 1812.)

### The Return to Vallonia

The company continued in pursuit of the Indians several days, traveling toward the northwestern part of the State but not overtaking them, they again turned in the direction of Vallonia to go into winter quarters. They were entirely out of provisions. The little supply of corn and meal taken with them when starting had been consumed, and they must therefore rely on the forest for subsistence. Such pasture as the woods supplied at the beginning of winter was the only support for their horses. But game was abundant. The deer, the turkey and the bear were numerous. The march of civilization had not as yet decimated their numbers, and unscared they stood in easy range of the white man's rifle. So the obtaining of food for a little army of seventy to a hundred men was a matter of small consideration.




They would halt on the march a couple of hours before night, and a detail of ten or a dozen men would bring game sufficient for a day's provision by the time the other members of the company had cared for the horses and prepared fire for roasting the meats. No camp kettles were carried with them. No "hard tack" was to be found in haversacks, but simply meat from turkey, deer and bear, roasted without salt. And yet those men, inured to all the inclemencies of the weather, without tents, and accustomed to forced marches through swamps, creeks and rivers, without bridges or boats, and fed upon this simple diet, were the very embodiment of physical strength and endurance. Every muscle and sinew seemed wrought in strength and every form cast in beauty's mould.

The march thus made was necessarily slow and not without incidents of daring and sometimes of defeat to members of the company. The streams, as before remarked, were unbridged and without boats. In fact, there were no marked or defined crossings, but they were generally crossed wherever approached, regardless of depth or width of stream. It was often a matter of amusement to those bold cavaliers to witness the utter recklessness of some and the timidity of others in buffeting the waves. Of course much of the conversation was in reference to hair-breath escapes from watery graves, interspersed with wonderful prowess of the favorite steed as a swimmer; and the more wary, sedate and cool-headed veterans were often treated to a good laugh at the expense of the less experienced, but not less daring, comrades. Often some of those spirited young fellows were fished from the stream in a half drowned condition.

After an absence of nearly a month, the company returned and went into winter quarters, an event which was hailed with delight by the settlers, knowing the additional security their presence gave. But to none was the return more welcome than the Hutchinson family, and especially the daughter, Nancy, for the day previous to the beginning of the last march an event had occurred in the Hutchinson fort which marked an era in her life.

#### The Wedding in the Fort

David Sturgeon and Nancy Hutchinson were married in Hutchinson's fort, on the 5th day of November, 1811, by



Esquire Reeves. The wedding was one peculiar to the times—full of merry-makings and frolic. It was an event of sufficient importance to call together the entire community, civil and military, of the four forts named in a previous chapter. The aged and the young alike came to participate in the festivities of the occasion. When the hour arrived to solemnize the marriage the youthful couple were presented to the assembled guests, fully dressed for marriage. Mr. Sturgeon was dressed in a light-buckskin hunting skirt, buckskin breeches, moccasins and coarse linen shirt. But he often told me that for beauty his pants rivaled anything he had ever seen. They were tanned after the most approved manner of those days, so as not only make the leather very soft and pliable, but to bring out that light and glossy appearance so peculiar to the buckskin when tanned by a master hand. Then they were cut and sewed by a tailor, a mechanic almost unknown to the backwoodsmen at that day, and ornamented by fancy stitchings in needle work, with costly braids of silk covered with orange and pink. The bride was dressed in a full suit, dress and underclothes of cotton goods, carded, spun and woven by herself. On her feet were a neat pair of buckskin moccasins; but no hose, (stockings they were called in those days). Thus arrayed the drum beat and the military, with their trapping of war, and the neighbors, filed in and witnessed the marriage ceremony. And there in that little fort in the wilderness surrounded by a few comrades and friends, the youthful pair, forsaking father and mother, clasped each other's gloveless hands and vowed, forsaking all others, to cleave to each other through life.

Sixty-six, nearly sixty-seven years have passed since the event of that November eve, and few, yes, very few, who enjoyed the festivities of the occasion, or danced with beating heart with bride or groom to music sweet, remain with us to tell the story. Perhaps Mrs. Duffey, living near Brownstown, half-sister to Mrs. Sturgeon, remembers that wedding day. If so, it is like a leaf torn from memory's page long years ago and covered since with many tears. Mrs. Sturgeon remembers every incident of the occasion, though now in her eighty-second year, as vividly as though it occurred but yesterday. She related to the writer not long since, to the minutest detail, every circumstance which then occurred. But there are events that do transpire in the true woman's life which time

cannot efface. One is when in plighted vow she gives her heart in marriage. The birth or death of children and the attendant scenes all are treasured up as sacred morsels and who that has set and heard the aged, care-worn mother, just on the verge of time, tell how a sweet, dear child, a ban of promise here and there, was snatched from her through time and laid within the bosom of the earth, and witnessed then her heavy sigh and saw the crystal tears chase each other o'er her furrowed cheek, is as enduring as the touch of time, and memory clings to those events and will not let them go.

### After the Battle of Tippecanoe

After the battle of Tippecanoe, Tecumseh and his followers withdrew from the State and made their winter quarters about the head of Lake Erie. The withdrawal of these war-like people—their utter route and defeat—so demoralized the roving bands of Indians that they either left the territory or sued for peace and the frontier settlements enjoyed comparative security for a time. The people returned to their homes to spend the winter in improving their homesteads. Again the smoke curled from the wooden chimney of the rude cabin and the log fire crackled on the earthen hearth as the busy housewife prepared her frugal meal. The woodman's ax rang clear from morn till night, as with steady stroke he wrought, while in easy reach sat his trusty rifle for the bear and wolf, most inveterate enemies of civilization, roamed the forest and many a heroic mother rescued her tender offspring from the very jaws of those ferocious beasts. The scent of blood from deer killed for food tempted them to the settler's door, and the long winter's night was made more dreary and hideous from their howlings while hour after hour their red eye-balls glared through the open crevices of the cabin, and the mother clasped more closely to her breast her terrified infant. And not till the dawn approached would they disappear, and then would they retire to the forest sullenly and slowly. Yet the rifle in steady hands thinned their numbers, and many a shaggy form was left behind or devoured by their comrades to satisfy their hunger.

### Grassy Fork in Ye Olden Times

At that time—the winter of 1811-12—there were in Grassy Fork township, Jackson county, but two or three families. At least in March, 1812, when David Sturgeon erected his first cabin on the farm whereon he died, there were but three families in that township. Isaac Burgh had built a cabin and cleared a small tract of land on the farm now owned by William Waskom, as early as the spring of 1810, and John Parks settled the Judge Dailey farm in the fall or winter following, and further up the ridge James Blair settled in 1812 or 13. Those parties—at least Burgh and Parks—carried with them when they moved their entire stock of goods—household and otherwise—on horseback. The first cabins were simple and rude in their construction, having but three walls to them and no fireplace. The fire was built just outside the building in front of the open space. This answered the purpose to cook their meals, warm the inmates, and keep away the wolves. The furniture of the first settlers, if it might be called furniture, was of the most primitive character. Two or three stools made from puncheons hewn from a log, a puncheon attached to the wall on pegs answered for table and cupboard, and a couple of logs placed in the corner of the room forming a square box filled with leaves and covered with deer and bear skins, made the bed. A few pewter dishes, a heavy iron pot, skillet and pan, supplied the cook room, and a buckskin sieve separated the bran from the meal, which was either obtained by beating it fine in a mortar or hollow crevice burned in the top of a stump, or by going on horse-back to the grant below Charlestown, in Clark county, through a pathless wilderness. I have heard a little incident related by Mrs. Sturgeon, which will serve to show to some extent the perils and hardships to which the early settlers were exposed.

### Perilous Journey in the Wilderness

She and her husband had been to his father's near Leavenworth, on the Ohio river, and returned home in the winter of 1812-13. The day they started was intensely cold, and a heavy snow was falling. They had a horse, pack-saddle, some few cooking utensils, household goods, etc., and a cow which Mr. Sturgeon's father had given him. Mrs. Sturgeon was



leading the horse, carrying the babe not six months old, and Mr. Sturgeon was driving the cow. Some distance from Leavenworth Mr. Sturgeon left his wife to pursue alone, and he took a by-path which led to a settler about a mile off the track to obtain some whisky. When he got the liquor, he thought he would not retrace his steps, but travel diagonally across the country and thus intercept his family much sooner.

By some means, the day being dark and snow falling fast, he lost his bearings, and did not overtake Mrs. Sturgeon till near night, while she, leading the horse, with pack-saddle containing all their goods, and driving a cow, through a deep forest, with no road, only following a bleared path, and carrying a tender infant, marched the live-long day through a blinding snow-fall. When, at dark, they made a settler's cabin and prepared to share the hospitalities of the same, she said her stockingless limbs were frozen rigid. The next morning they resumed their journey, and a companion joined them who was coming to Vallonia, which served to lighten somewhat the tediousness of the way. But on arriving at what is now called Millport she says she came near losing her life. In order to cross the river, the two men made a couple of rafts. Mrs. Sturgeon and the man traveling with them embarked on one, with their pack-saddle and goods, she leading the horse while he swam by the raft. Mr. Sturgeon was on the other and drove cow or horse as was required. When about the middle of the stream, the horse became unruly, and pulled her into the water with her babe. She sank, but came to the surface, when by extraordinary efforts she was rescued from a watery grave, still clinging with a mother's love to her first-born. At eleven o'clock at night, cold, wet and hungry, they reached Vallonia, where they were gladly received and cared for by kind friends.

#### Some White Settlers

Some French made a settlement at Vallonia as early as the year 1790, and cleared a small tract of land lying west and south of the present town, on what is now A. J. Miller's farm. Aquilla Rogers, the first white man who settled in Jackson county, settled among the Indians and French at Vallonia about the year 1805. This was the only settlement effected until the fall of 1809, when James Hutchinson settled the farm now owned by Christian Doerr. In the spring following

1810, John and Isaac Weathers came and settled near James Hutchinson to whom they were related by marriage.

Abraham Miller spoken of in a former chapter, settled on James Hutchinson's farm in the spring of 1810, and raised a crop but at the close of the war settled upon the farm now owned by Mrs. John P. Miller, four miles southeast of Brownstown, where he raised a large family, most of whom are gone. The families above mentioned came from Kentucky. They were that class of men who desire to be in the front ranks of emigration, and as the settlers thickened around them they longed for and sought out newer fields, for they had not only a passionate fondness for the chase, but in the wild solitude of the forest they were at home. They loved the solitude of the wilderness and the wild freedom of uncultivated fields. In the spring of 1811, Jesse Durham, father of Harrison Durham, came to Vallonia and settled. In a short time he bought the farm now occupied by Colonel Wells, where he lived the most of his life. Thomas Ewing, a brother-in-law, came with him. He was a bachelor and a man of fine attainments, but he was not proof against the smiles of beauty, and in a short time he married James Hutchinson's third daughter, now Mrs. Duffey, residing near Brownstown. They settled on and made the farm now owned by Asher Woodmansee's heirs.

William Graham, so long and favorably known in the county, who in the early history of the State served his friends in the State Legislature and in the Congress of the United States, came from Kentucky in 1811, and settled the farm adjoining the Driftwood church, so well known in the neighborhood as the Graham farm. He first married a Miss Thompson, aunt to Turner W. Thompson, and after her decease he married the widow Elliott, mother of John R. Elliott, with whom he lived till his death a few years ago. He was a scholar in the truest acceptation of the term, for he had a correct knowledge of men and things and this, coupled with a spirit of philanthropy and great goodness of heart, made him a most desirable neighbor and friend. He rests from his labors beside his life partners in the pleasant graveyard near the Driftwood Church. Neat stones mark their resting place, and many an aged man and woman, pausing to read the inscriptions on the marble slabs, will wipe a tear from

sorrow's eye and silently go their way. He accumulated considerable property, and left no heirs.

### The First Church

The first church erected in the county was built on the ground now used as a cemetery near the Driftwood Church. It was on the southwest corner of the Graham farm, and was built in the year 1815. It was a comfortable log building of moderate dimensions with large wooden chimney and puncheon floor. Its benches were not of modern make, but were hewn from the forest. A straight poplar or ash sapling of ten or twelve inches in diameter was cut and split and hewn, and four legs inserted, and the bench was complete. The house was free to all denominations, and here, for miles and miles came the pioneer and family on the Sabbath day to worship God. They came on foot and horseback from the sparse and remote settlements of Vallonia, Highton Hill, Brownstown, and from a little settlement surrounding a trading post kept by John McCormick and two of the Buskirks on the farm now owned and occupied by my life-long friend, John J. Cummins. In this settlement were James and Josiah Lindsey, Robert Burgh, some of whose descendants are in the county yet and Cyrus Douglass, the head of the old Douglass family, so well known to early settlers, but now almost extinct among us. These, with the Sturgeon and Burgh settlement in Grassy Fork, made up the congregation which assembled at Driftwood. No organ, with high-toned keys, and plied with skillful hands, gave music to the audience, nor minister with lengthened gown graced the pulpit. But that bold and fearless people, strong in the impulse of religious worship, with voices clear and strong, made music of sweetest order. Here the devout man of God in reverence would time the hymn, and man and youth, matron and maid, would join with skillful voice to bear their several parts. Then came the prayer, where all devoutly knelt and joined their hearts in thankfulness to the Great Giver of Good. The revered man of God, tall and thin, with whitened locks reaching down to his shoulders, broke the bread of life to listening souls, and many a stalwart man, who feared no danger, would brush the falling tear while listening to truths divine. After service before separating, they took each other kindly by the hand and

inquired after the health of the family and neighborhood, and was one missing from the congregation from sickness or distress, he was sought out and his wants supplied.

### The Increase In Population

The years 1811 to 1815 inclusive added largely to the population of the frontier settlements. In 1814 the Government of the United States had concluded a treaty of peace with the Indian tribes in the Northwest, which gave additional security to the settlers and inspired them with fresh courage. In the spring of 1814,

#### Leonard C. Shoemaker,

father of Josiah Shoemaker, now residing on Pea-ridge, settled one mile north of Brownstown at the Mooney crossing. He was a revolutionary soldier. He was at the battle of Yorktown, and assisted in the capture of Lord Cornwallis. He saw the British stack their arms and march out of the fort. He also served in the Indian wars, and was a captain of militia. In 1816 he was elected, with James McGee, Associate Judge of Jackson county. David Slade was then Presiding Judge. Subsequently he bought of Judge McGee the tract of land now owned by Frederick Tormoehlen, and removed to Driftwood township.

#### Josiah Shoemaker,

son of L. C. Shoemaker, was born in Knox county, Kentucky, in 1809, and came to Indiana in 1814 with his father. He is well known to the old settlers of the county, having resided in this county sixty-three years. He saw the forest disappear and "the wilderness made to blossom like a rose," and now at the advanced age of 74 years, he lives in the enjoyment of a sufficient competence to insure comfort and in the midst of a long list of friends who have known him for more than a half century. May not only his four score years be allotted him but many more, that he may enjoy the fruits of that civilization to which he has so largely contributed. And may the sunset of his life be as calm as the morn was perilous.

#### Col. Samuel Burcham,

father of Elder James Burcham, with his family came here in 1813, and settled the old farm just north of the present



residence of Morse B. Singer. The site of his early home is there. A little mound marks the foundation of his cabin and a few decayed fruit trees point out the home of his youth. The surviving member of his family that I know of is James Burcham, Sr., of Kossuth, Washington county, now 76 years of age; but his grand and great-grandchildren inhabit the land he subdued. At the time some five families were west of White river—two of the Beems, William and Jacob Flinn, and Mr. Guthrie at Leesville. This settlement suffered from an attack of the Indians in the spring of 1815, which threw a gloom over the neighboring settlements, and for a time aroused the settlers to a state of frenzy. The shock came so sudden and so unlooked for and its results so disastrous as to alarm and excite every one and again destroy their confidence in the pledges of peace made by the Indians, whose broken vows were written in treachery and the blood of slaughtered victims. A man by the name of Guthrie and two of the Flinns were clearing land, when they were attacked by the Indians. Guthrie was shot through the shoulder and made his escape to the fort. Young Flinn was shot and scalped, and died the next day, and old Jacob Flinn was taken prisoner by the Indians. This was the last attack made on the settlers of Jackson county; yet they felt insecure, and looked upon the pledges made by the Indians when smoking the pipe of peace as an empty sound—a mere subterfuge to more readily ensnare their victims and place him in their power. When the mighty angel shall disclose the startling facts to the astonished nations and tribes of men, these treacherous, heartless and bloody savages will have much to atone for. Their garments will be crimsoned with the blood of innocence, and many a gray-haired man, tottering on a broken staff, and many an aged mother will rise up in judgment against them. But quiet and confidence having again been somewhat restored, the discomfited settlers betook themselves to labor to improve their homes. The axmen were busy in the forest felling trees, hewing and splitting puncheons for the erection of more comfortable homes, and the sound of industry echoed and re-echoed from many a hill top, for the hardships and privations of the pioneers did not all cease with the retreat of the savages. The rose bush did not spring unbidden from the earth, nor the forest become transformed to cultivated fields without steady, vigorous labor. The dark forest would

not let go her rooty hold to fields of wheat and maize, nor marshy reeds to cultivated meadows, at the bidding of the magician or the sweep of the magic wand.

### The First Mill

The great need of the settlers was a mill, for a trip to or beyond Charlestown on horseback, with several streams to cross, which were often swimming, was anything but desirable, and the slow process of gritting or pounding corn into meal was too tedious to be continued. In 1812, a two-wheel mill was built by Aquilla Rogers at Vallonia, on the branch ~~above~~ where Thomas Craft now lives. It was an entire failure. But in the fall of the same year James Hutchinson erected a mill on the branch just west of Christian Doerr's residence, which did well. It would grind six to seven bushels a day. It is said that at one time the old man was so thronged with grinding that he ground all night, grinding in twenty-four hours eleven bushels of corn. And yet people were compelled for many miles around to depend upon this mill, which was simple in construction and imperfect in the execution of its work, only grinding corn. There was not, however, much need for a flouring mill for wheat was not introduced for the first five years among the settlers; yet the mills of those days, imperfect as they were, served as fingerboards to better times among the settlers. Many is the good hoe or Johnny cake that the kind mother and wife has lifted from smoking lard before the open fire and placed it fresh and warm beside some roasted venison on the puncheon table, where father, surrounded by stalwart boys and girls, would break the fast. Next in 1815, Iseminger built a mill on the present site of the Shepperd mill and put a flouring attachment to it—a bolt to be turned by hand—but the flour was so indifferent that the people preferred Johnny cake.

### The First School

The first school taught in the county was by Captain Bigger, of the Rangers, at Vallonia, in 1812-13.

### The First Distillery

✓ The first distillery in the county was built on the little branch, on the south side of Morse B. Singer's home farm, by Isaac Harrell, in 1814 or 15.

Thus side by side the pioneer erected his church, his school

and his distillery, but, unlike us, he had not learned to poison his liquors. He gave them to his neighbors pure from the still, and while they quaffed an honest draught they were not drunken, crazed or vicious, but sober, moral upright, religious men.

### The Grassy Fork Settlement

The settlement in Grassy Fork township was of more tardy growth and up to the spring of 1815 there were but four families before alluded to, to-wit: David Sturgeon, Isaac Burge, John Parks and James Blair, Sr., in the entire district of country now comprising Grassy Fork and Washington townships. The first spring that Sturgeon settled on his farm—March 5, 1813—he cleared the green wood, chopped up, piled and burned five acres of land, and put it in cultivation, beside going to about twenty log-rollings and house-raisings in the border settlements. He has told me that he often walked five or ten miles before day to one of the settlements to assist in log-rolling. It was a time when men must of needs depend on their neighbors far and near.

The clearings were heavy, many of them being taken from the green woods, and new buildings the same. But men delighted to render such assistance and not to be invited was taken as an insult. To one who can remember those rollings of forty years ago, (and they were heavier before that), it is a matter of excitement and pleasure to review them in memory and see twenty, thirty and not unfrequently forty men assembled together for miles around at a very early hour in the morning, and with well shaven spikes on shoulder repair to the clearing. Men of all ages were there, and usually a few lads to bring the water and the jug for the latter was as indispensable as the spike. To have thought of raising a house or rolling a field of logs without whisky, would have been simply ridiculous. Men were accustomed to it, and all classes—church members and ministers—took their dram and went home sober.

The forenoon was usually spent by all the hands working in company or in groups together; but after dinner had been served and the usual rest of an hour had been taken, wherein many of the youth would try their skill at jumping and wrestling, the universal sport of the day, all hands repaired to

the clearing. Two men were selected by the crowd to divide the hands and two the ground for the evening's race. The captains usually doffed their hats and donned red cotton handkerchiefs, and after a dram had been taken all around the work in earnest began. I have seen, when quite a boy, old David Sturgeon with that red handkerchief on, leading his band of youthful log-men, (for he usually selected the young as much as possible for they, like he, were impulsive), in the evening's race. Then work was done, and the clearing lead up in strips of lands to be worked in thorough. Then a little rest and drink, and then, at the shout of the captains, all hands were ready to exert muscle. But the real excitement of the contest culminated in the piling of the last heap. Usually three or four trees or logs of great length and weight were selected for the last pile, where all the hands met together for a mutual test of muscle.

After the usual rest and drink each captain called his men and they paired for the lift, the captains lifting together and the men in their order. When the word "ready" passed along the lines and the quick shouts of the captains were given, every muscle was strained to its utmost tension, and many a spike was in the heap did the excitement cease. Then supper, then the usual shake of the hand, and then each repaired to his distant home, many not reaching it till midnight. But how, asks many of my readers, did the good mothers, with their scanty stock of cooking utensils, prepare, without the aid of stoves, comfortable meals for so many. Go and ask Mrs. Carr, step-mother of John F. and George W. Carr, Mrs. Sturgeon, relict of David Sturgeon, Mrs. Duffey, ancient relict of Thomas Ewing, and the little remnant of those good old mothers now left among us still standing as sentinels on the waste of years, and they will tell you that not a man left their table hungry or dissatisfied.

It is true, at the time of which I am writing, from 1812 to 1815 sweet cakes, pies, tarts and jellies did not enter into the bill of fare. If flour could have been had, fruits were wanting, and sugar and molasses had not found their way among the settlers, while tea and coffee were entirely unknown, milk and water filling their place. But the well-baked or roasted saddle of venison, brown and good, the more delicate turkey, plump and fat, well stewed with potatoes, and



the rich gravy thickened with corn meal, and large plates of dried pumpkins, sweet and juicy, accompanied with large loaves of corn bread which had been prepared the day previous, and not unfrequently an oily slice of bear's meat, smoked as bacon, was added to the bill of fare. Yet these were relished more than the daintiest food, and men grew strong and healthy on them.

But slow as had been the growth of the settlement in Grassy Fork, in the spring of 1815 several new families were added to the neighborhood, giving a zest and fullness to the flow of life. John Davis, father of the old Davis family—a family of sixteen children—twelve girls and four boys—settled just south of and owned that beautiful hill on which is now situated the Pleasant Grove cemetery. Old Billy Moore, whose daughter Davis married, settled there also and died the 22nd of February, 1822, at the advanced age of 97 years. This was the first death of an adult which occurred in the township, and neighbors came for miles to dig his grave and lay him down to rest. His grave was at the base of the hill, near where the cemetery was afterwards formed, and forty years subsequent to his death Mrs. Davis had his grave opened to bear his remains to the cemetery, but not a particle of dust was to be found.

**James Russell, Sr.,**

Father of John and James Russell, settled near Mount Sidney in 1817, and James Smith the same year. In 1816, Reuben Rucker the elder, came to Grassy Fork, and settled on the banks of the Pond creek, one-half mile south of Kleinmeyer's. He was the father of an extensive family, amongst whom was Nathan C., Jesse T. and John B. Rucker. He had three other sons, who died early in life; but the three first named were the elder and bore their share of the labor of the early settlement. Nathan settled one mile north of Tampico, where he opened a beautiful farm, raised a large family and died a few years ago in the full respect of all his neighbors. His grave and that of his wife, with some of his children and grandchildren may be seen on a beautiful knoll by the roadside, in front of the family mansion, where he settled in 1825. Jesse T. lives in New Albany. He is near 70 years of age. John B. died in the prime of life of consumption.

**Jesse Tuell, the elder,**

Settled on that beautiful farm now owned by his grandson, O. W. Tuell, of Grassy Fork. He came originally from Kentucky to Clark county, and subsequently to Jackson county, where he and his family, who were, many of them, grown when they settled in the county in 1817, acted a conspicuous part in opening of the same. Mr. Tuell was the fortunate father of seven sons in succession. All save two grew to man's estate, and their history is a part of the history of the country. Afterwards three daughters were born—Polly, who married Judge Daily, Nancy, who married Rev. E. Hornady, and Elizabeth, who married Rhodes W. Mead—as also one son—Philip, now a resident of Washington county. Of this numerous family, so well known and loved by the early settlers, men of whom it was said in early time would travel a day's Journey to smite a foe or relieve a friend, all are gone save one. Philip is the solitary scion left of a time-honored race. Next came

**Hezekiah Applegate**

Father of Philip D. Applegate of Vallonia. He settled the farm now owned by William Sturgeon, where, in addition to the son named, he raised a large family, all of whom, save Philip and Mrs. Miller, relict of John P. Miller, have either died or left the state. He was the first Justice of Peace in his township, having been elected in 1820, which office he filled for many years to the entire satisfaction of his neighbors. His house was but a stone's throw from Sturgeon's and their children grew up together and bore their fathers to their resting places in the same grave-yard. In 1818,

**Gabriel Woodmansee,**

Father of Asher Woodmansee, formerly of Brownstown, came from New York and settled the farm now owned by Frederick Stahl, Sr., but he and family are mostly gone. His eldest son, Thomas, was buried in August 1822, on the old farm. He and his wife and two daughter—Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Moore—sleep in the quiet cemetery of the Driftwood church where the first church of the county was erected, of which they were members. Asher rests in the family grave-yard on his farm at Brownstown. Asa Woodmansee, of Seymour and

Catherine Wayman relict of Charles L. Wayman and mother of O. W. Tuell, are all that remain in this county of that very extensive family. Then came

#### the Mays and Beldons

The two Mays, Thomas and Reuben, still live at Tampico, almost ninety years of age. Their strong, iron frames have withstood the wear of time for near a century, and yet their mind and memory are clear and good. They are a few of those pioneers who penetrated the wilderness at an early day, and have seen it transformed to a garden. They and their comrades wrought together as one man for the common good. At the stroke of the ax the forest disappeared and the cultivated fields spread out. The camp-fires of the savages have died out on the mountains and their war-whoop is still in the valley. Beautiful farms, full of comfort and teeming with life and surrounded with all the conveniences of civilization, mark the place of their early cabins. Then Oliver Beldon and the Fislars, adding to the physical and moral strength of locks have been fanned by the breezes of ninety winters, yet the neighborhood, and old William Clark, whose whitened active and strong in body and in mind, he may be seen at Tampico cheerful as when a boy.

#### Conclusion

Kind readers, these letters for the present at least must be closed. I have written far beyond my first intention; but when I came to take in review the memory of our fathers, now fast passing away, the services they render their country, and the manifold blessings conferred on their children, I really did not know when to break off. Most of them crossed the great river of death and are housed upon the distant shore. The little remnant with whitened locks, are nearing the stream, preparing to join their comrades. They bind together the present and the past, and with deep solicitude they watch us, to see if we are worthy of our ancestry. Their history was a part of the history of the country, and the inheritance they bequeathed was liberty.

But, kind editor, I have claimed your indulgence too long, and have extended these articles to too great a length. I have sketched briefly the appearance and disappearance of

some of the families of the early settlers, most of whom I knew or was acquainted with their immediate descendants. But they are gone, like ripened shearers gathered to the granary of the universe. Their ancient cabins are torn down and the mound of their ruins can scarce be marked.

Kind readers of The Banner—

Farewell! A word that must be and hath been—  
A sound which makes us linger—yet, Farewell!

—H. W. Chadwick





The following are letters written by John H. Benton of Washington, D. C., depicting the early history of Southern Indiana, particularly of Jackson County, telling of the work of the Rangers during the years of 1810-13, and biographies of early settlers. The letters were published in The Banner in 1893 and republished in 1943.—EDITOR

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### A Letter From Washington

The paragraph in a recent communication of your Vallonia correspondent relating to my lifelong friend, Andrew J. Miller, awakened a train of pleasant recollections of that worthy man covering a period of more than fifty years; for I first began to know who and what Jackson Miller was in June, 1837, when I saw him in Brownstown with his then newly married wife. And now after the lapse of so many years I find no little enjoyment in recalling the many pleasing incidents connected with the beginning and maturer years of our acquaintance. His relation of matters connected with the early history of Vallonia and its vicinity, as they were told him by his father, brought to my recollection some of the tragic events connected with the early history of our county, and particularly the killing of the two settlers—Buskirk and Sturgeon—by the Indians, as related to me by his brother, Frederick Miller about forty years ago. This killing occurred in 1813, at which time Mr. Miller was nine years old, and what he then saw and heard concerning these Indian murders was indelibly stamped upon his memory. His version of them is in my judgment substantially correct as to time, place and circumstances. I give them as he gave them to me.

Buskirk was killed while gathering pumpkins in what was afterwards the north-west corner of my father's farm adjoining Brownstown. The Indian crept upon him and shot him with his own gun, which he had leaned against a tree. The fact of his death having reached the fort at Vallonia, a squad of several mounted men repaired to the place and buried him, and on their return,

when near what was for many years known as Cheeney Hill, one of their number, a Mr. Sturgeon, who had been drinking pretty freely, proposed being the first one to reach the fort, and in spite of their remonstrance and warning of danger he clapped spurs to his horse and dashed ahead. He had scarcely disappeared from their sight when the report of a volley of rifles gave suggestion of his probable fate. The squad raised a yell and spurring forward reached the crest of the hill in time to see their unfortunate comrade struggling upon the ground at the foot of it, and three or four Indians surrounding and striking him with their tomahawks in the most vigorous manner. At the sight of the approaching yelling squad the Indians fled, and the squad, without a moment's halt, made for the fort at the utmost speed of their horses. It was near night-fall when they reached it. A call for volunteers to bring in the murdered man was at once made, and failing to meet with a prompt response, Mr. Miller's mother, "Aunt Peggy" as she was known in our day, stimulated the volunteering by declaring that if the men didn't go she and the women would. A rescuing party of five, accompanied by a lot of fierce dogs, as hostile to Indians as their owners, and infallible at detecting their presence, proceeded in the dark to the Durham branch, where they found the dead body of the man. And now using the words of Mr. Miller as written by him in a memorandum and handed me for publication, "Rich Beem, John Neely and Adam Miller were the three men who tied the dead man up while the other two stood guard." The party returned without molestation to the fort, and Mr. Miller was a looker-on and by the light of burning torches saw them untie the blanket in which they had brought the body, and saw them examine the ghastly wounds made by the tomahawks—one in particular was indelibly stamped upon his memory, a frightful one that was inflicted on the top of the head, which was quite bald by reason of age. He had not been scalped. His horse being on the run when fired upon, only one shot of four or five, perhaps, struck him and it took effect on "the wrist of his bridle hand," and had it not been that his horse

shied and dashed over the little bank to the left of the road and thrown its rider, it would have brought him in safety to the fort, which it reached a few minutes afterwards. The Indians fired from an ambush behind a log a few paces to the right of the road at the descent of the hill. My mother had "the blind" pointed out to her when she passed that way for the first time some six or seven years afterward, and she located the spot to me a number of times in the early years of my life. Mr. Miller, like his brother Jackson, was a sober, truthful man, not given to fabrication, and I know of no more reliable source of correct information as to the events related herein than is derived from him who say in part and who heard the particulars related at the time of their occurrence, and that over and over again by those who had personal knowledge of all the circumstances. Their father, Abram Miller, and their mother, Ann Margaret (Aunt Peggy) lie side by side in the grave yard at Brownstown., He departing this life in Dec. 1856, at the age of 83 and she in July 1865, at the age of eighty.

Very Respectfully,

John H. Benton.

Washington, D. C.  
January 30th, 1893.

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Thursday, February 23, 1893

**Early History of Jackson County**  
By John H. Benton, Washington, D. C.

February 13th, 1893.

Dear Sir:—I have seen and talked with Mr. John Ketcham a prominent figure in the early history of our county. It was at the close of a lovely day in May, 1855, that I was seated at the north portico of the state-house at Indianapolis, when a portly, elderly, well-to-do looking gentleman approached and after an interchange of salutations, seated himself on the step near me, and a colloquy somewhat as follows ensued: "Well," began the gentleman, "I suppose that you, like myself, are a visitor to the city." An affirmative an-

swer was followed by an inquiry as to what part of the country I was from. The answer that I was from Brownstown, in Jackson county, elicited, after a moments hesitation, the remark, "Well I suppose then you have heard of John Ketcham?" "Yes, indeed" was our response, "He was the proprietor of our town." "Well, sir, I'm the very man", was his announcement that made our "heart of heart" rejoice. Thereupon a long hour's talk followed in which Vallonia and Brownstown and the brave men who began to people those localities, while the Indian was "abroad in the land" were the topics of his most entertaining discourse.

Mr. Ketcham I am informed died at his home in Monroe Co., in 1864, at the age of 87, and from this date, he was 79 years of age at the time of our interview, though I should judge him to have been a dozen years at least short of that age. It has been a matter of regret to me of late years that I did not commit to writing at the time the substance of what he said to me concerning the men and incidents of those early times of which he retained a most distinct recollection.

This fact, however, was well impressed upon my memory that so far as the facts and circumstances of the Indian murders of 1812-13 are concerned, his relation of them agreed substantially with that of Mr. Frederick Miller, recently published in the Banner. And it was likewise in harmony with those of Mr. Hugh A. Findley and Mr. George W. Hays that I received in repeated conversation and soon afterward.

Mr. Findley, it is true, did not come to our county till 1819, some six or seven years after the occurrence of these events; but being possessed of an unusually retentive memory as to facts and their attending circumstances even to the minutest particular, whatever he related upon the information of others as to these much talked of events is entitled to the fullest credence. As his account of the killing of Buskirk and Sturgeon would be but a repetition of Mr. Miller's the mere mention of their concurrence will suffice, and so I proceed with his narrative of the killing of a Mr. Doan.



This unfortunate man, who lived on or near Mr. Findley's late homestead place, had spent the night with a Mr. Lindsey,—the family name of Mr. Findley's wife, who lived on or near the McCormick place. As there were indications of Indians in the morning, Lindsey dissuaded him from leaving for his home; but as the day advanced, and the fall of rain subsided, his fear vanished and he determined to venture, and so mounting his beast and shouldering his gun, he set out. He had gone but a short distance, when, descending the steep bank of a little stream, or ravine now crossed by the Brownstown and Seymour road, a few hundred yards west of the Findely farm house, an Indian concealed in a hollow tree standing on the opposite bank, fired upon him through an opening in the tree and shot him dead,—the ball, if I remember right, striking him square in the forehead. He pitched head long from his horse into the water, and his gun, which was probably carried on his shoulder, was also pitched forward, muzzle-end downward and imbedded in the soft mud, at the bottom of the ravine, then well filled with water; and there it was found standing soon afterward, when his scalped remains were found and taken away for burial.

The same day, I think it was, of this occurrence, William Rudick and his brother were hunting in the hills, a few miles, from where Doan was killed, and were fired upon by Indians. One of the bullets struck the breach-pin screw of William's gun, dismounted the barrell from the stock, and glancing, lodged in his arm. They were all grit, however, and the brother returning the fire, wounded one of the Indians, who, with difficulty by the help of his comrades, made good his escape, though pursued for some distance.

The fact of the fight between the Ruddicks and the Indians and the wounding of the Indian, and probably, of Ruddick, I had from Mr. Ketcham and Mr. Findely; and the circumstances of the wounding of William Ruddick and the dismounting of his gun from its stock, I have from a recent letter from Mr. Josiah Shewmaker. The killing of Mr. Hays I reserve for my next.

Mr. Thomas Carr was among the very early settlers of our county, and like the most of them "pitched his tent" within easy supporting distance of the Indian trading post at Vallonia, a name most likely given it by some of the early French traders, and probably a modification of the French word vallon, (pronounced vah-long), signifying a dell or little valley, and suggested by its location at the entrance of the dell that lies among the hills, or high rolling ground abutting upon the place from the east.

I have from Mr. George W. Carr Jr., who has been a resident of this city for some years, the following account of his grand-father, Thomas Carr, the personage who is mainly the subject of this missive. Thomas Carr was born in Va., about 1783. His father, John Carr, a native of Ireland, dying when Thomas was quite young, he was brought up by his mother with her four other children to Mercer Co., Ky., where he was brought up by his maternal uncle, Thomas Ewing, who was a man of some prominence among the early settlers. In 1803 Mr. Carr was married and moved to Clark county, where his sons John Flavel and George Whitefield, named for eminent calvinist preachers, were born, the former in 1805, and the latter in 1807. In 1817, or thereabouts, Mr. Ewing Sr., who was a slaveholder and possessed of considerable means for the times, visited and bought for the use of his children quite a body of land near Vallonia; and here Mr. Carr moved with his family early in 1811, and entered upon a seven years lease on one of these tracts; but owing to the Indian disturbances of 1812-13, during the most of which time the settlers were fortified at Vallonia, he moved his family back to Clark county in the fall of the latter year. His son George W., then only five years old, distinctly remembered to the last of his long life the fact of his playing with other children outside of the walls of the stockade which was built early in 1814. Mr. Carr returned to his lease in the spring of 1814, planted and raised a crop, and in the fall of that year or the spring of 1815, moved the family to our county. At the expiration of his lease, he moved with his family on January, 1818 into a cabin which he had built

on a quarter-section of land on Pea ridge which he had entered the previous fall, and here he lived on what was known as the "Carr homestead" till his death in 1847 at the age of about sixty. And here his sons John and George grew to manhood under the hardships and privations of pioneer life; both of them living to achieve in after years success and honorable, well merited distinction in life, the former having repeatedly represented our county in both branches of the legislature, as did the latter from the county of Lawrence, and both having been members of the convention that framed our State constitution, the latter having presided over its deliberations; and in addition to this, each of them having held other responsible positions of public trust. John F. departed this life in April, 1878, at the age of 73, and Geo. W. in May, 1892, at the age of 84 years.

Very Respectfully,

John H. Benton.

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Written for the Banner at the request of A. J. Miller in criticism of the error of last week.

✓ An article in the Banner of last week states that it was Adam Miller who assisted in rescuing the body of Sturgeon at what is now called Fislar Hill, in 1812. This is not correct. The party consisted of Abraham Miller, Richard Beem, Nealy Beem, Thomas Ewing and Joseph Britton.

At the time of this murder Adam Miller was at Detroit, Michigan. In the early summer of 1812, Adam, contrary to the wishes of his Kentucky father, started last and joined the Federal Army, at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He was soon after sent west to join the division of William Hull in Michigan. On the 16th day of August, 1812, General Hull hoisted a flag of truce, and surrendered to the whole of Michigan. For this he was tried by a court-martial on three charges; treason, cowardice and conduct unbecoming an officer. The soldiers who fought under Gen. Hull felt deeply this humiliation, and many of them resigned their positions in the army, resolved not to re-

enlist. Adam Miller deserted and about the mid-winter came to Vallonia. In the early spring of 1813 he went by way of his fathers to the south where he joined the army of General Jackson. During the years 1813 and 1814 Miller was chiefly employed in Jackson's Indiana Campaigns, but on Jan. 8, 1815, he was present at the famous New Orleans surrender. This battle closed the war and Miller came home, but preferring Vallonia to his fathers home in Kentucky, he made Vallonia his residence, where he married a sister of Abraham Miller, thus becoming brother-in-laws. Otherwise Abraham Miller and Adam Miller were not related.

The above is a faithful account of Adam Miller's services concerning the period under consideration, as related to me by A. J. Miller, whose father, Abraham Miller, was without any doubt the central figure in that little party that saved for burial the body of the lamented Sturgeon.

Respectfully, C.

Editor's Note—The correction referred to in the forgoing was an error on the part of the compositor, who should have set the name ABRAM instead of ADAM. Our historian, Mr. Benton, is not in error.

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Thursday, March 2, 1893

### Early History of Jackson County

So far as my inquiries have extended as to when the settlement of our county began, which appears to have had its beginning at Vallonia, I have failed to learn with certainty of any whose coming antedates the year 1811. And notable among the first arrivals, if not the very first, was that group of sturdy pioneers who had their nativity in what was then Mercer county, Ky., who made their advent into the then unbroken wilderness of our county early in the spring of that year, coming as did Durham, and Ewing, and McAfee directly from Ky., or after a sojourn of several years in Clark county, as was the case with Mr. Carr.



And among the sturdy men that encountered the perils and hardships of a pioneer life in Valonia settlement, there were few, if any, that were more conspicuous in influence and activity for the general welfare than was Jesse B. Durham, the commandant, as we are told, of the fort erected early in 1812, and which for something like eighteen months from the fall of the year, afforded within the enclosure of its ample stockade a place of refuge of the tomahawk and scalping knife of the savage.

Col. Jesse B. Durham, the title by which he was known in after life, a native of Ky., was born March 9, 1788, in or near Perryville, the county seat of Boyle county, then a part of Mercer county, and on his twenty-second birthday, March 9, 1810, he was united in marriage to a Miss Ewing, Catharine I believe, a daughter of Mr. Samuel Ewing, of Perryville, and a sister of Mrs. John McAfee, all of whom save Samuel Ewing became permanent residents of our county from its initial settlement in 1811.

And here, in or near our ancient town of Valonia, was born in January, 1812, their son, Ewing Durham. A distinction generally conceded to him of being the first white child that was born within the present limits of our county. We say, generally, for reason that the claim, as I have heretofore stated, was contested by Mr. George W. Hays. Ewing Durham was quite a popular man in his day, and was sheriff of our county from Aug., 1838 to Aug., 1842, and during his sheriffality executed on October 7, 1831, the extreme penalty of the law against James Summers for wife-murder, the only instance of hanging under judicial authority that has occurred in our county.

Although Mr. Durham chose to remain in the settlement, and take his chances with the 23 families that took refuge in the fort, rather than to fall back to some place of greater security in the older settlements along the Ohio, as did many others, it appears that his wife and child returned to her former home in Kentucky, on account of the threatening, dreaded hostility of the Indians, and here their son, Harrison, was born to them in

1813. Harrison Durham grew to manhood and old age in our county, the whole of his life, save the first and few of its last years having been spent in or near Vallonia and Brownstown. He died at Mitchell, Ind., in Dec., 1886, at the age of 78, respected and kindly remembered by all who knew him. In the Banner's obituary notice of his life and death, it is related that "as soon as he was old enough for the "journey", his mother returned (from Ky.) to the fort carrying the babe, her husband walking". Ewing Durham died at his home in the northern suburb of Vallonia in 1846, at the age of 34 years.

Other children were born to them, Hannibal, who died in early manhood in 1841; John B., who like his father, was of colossal size, suddenly cut off by disease in the prime of life; and a daughter, bearing, if we remember right, her mother's name of Catharine who became the wife of Col. S. T. Wells. Of the family, only two are now living, Miss Elvira Durham, residing in Denver, Colo., and Mr. Samuel Durham, residing in Marion, Iowa, having gone to the state while yet a territory, and as early certainly as 1844, for we remember that at democratic barbecue in Brownstown, Oct. 24, 1844, the band wagon from Salem was made additionally conspicuous by a pair of enormous elk horns, said to have been sent or brought from Iowa by Samuel Durham, where he was employed in the survey of public lands.

Col. Durham lived a goodly number of years to enjoy the fruits of his sober, industrious, well spent life. We retain a distinct recollection of having visited his home when a lad of a dozen years, in company with his wife's kinsman, "Lon" Wort, of our enjoyment of an excellent dinner, and of our admiration of the well ordered household, the pictures of the President from Washington to Van Buren on the parlor walls, to the spacious barn teeming with the harvest, the cattle grazing or reposing in the pasture, and last, though not least, the orchard with its abundance of ripening fruit. And this allusion to the household reminds me that Mrs. Durham was the first lady in our county to own a cooking stove, her niece, Mrs. Dr. Wirt, was

the second, and my mother the third, of which she (my mother) became the delighted proprietress in 1839, if I remember right.

Col. Durham was staunch Presbyterian and an ardent democrat. He represented the county in the state legislature one term along in the thirties, and until the office of Auditor was created in 1846, and the sale of the school lands, (Sec. 16 of each congressional township) and management of the funds arising therefrom was made part of its duties, he had held for a number of years the office of School Commissioner, having charge this important public interest.

He departed this life in good hope of life eternal in Oct., 1850, at the age of 62 years and 10 months; and the companion of his toils and cares, his privations and prosterity made her departure the same year, though I am not advised as to the month. In conclusion, it is proper that I state that the most of the data on which this letter is based is derived from a recent letter from Mr. Durham, of Iowa, to whom reference herein has been made.

Very respectfully,

John H. Benton

Washington, D. C.  
February 22, 1893.

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### An Interesting Fact

Washington, D. C., Feb. 24, '93.

Ed. Banner: I send you herewith a copy of a letter just received from Mr. Absaolm Ketcham, a son of the Col. John Ketcham who conveyed to our county the land on which its county seat is located. Knowing the interest your readers will take in its perusal, and desiring to give it as extended a notice as possible. I send it to the Banner as well as a copy to the Herald for publication.

Very Respectfully,

John H. Benton.

## The Letter

Clear Creek, Monroe Co., Ind.

February 16, 1893.

Mr. John H. Benton,

Dear Sir: Your favor of the 6th inst. came safely to hand, and I should have answered at once, but could not give as much information on several points as I hoped to be able to do in a few days. My Father, as you were correctly informed, died in 1864 at the age of 82. When almost an octogenarian, with intellect as clear and bright as a May morning, he wrote in his terse style a short history of himself, and connected with it is the information you desire. I had several hundred copies of his funeral, together with his reminiscences, printed, but find that I have from time to time given them all away, and shall have to call on a neighbor for a copy, which you will please return to me when done with it. I shall appreciate a paper published in Brownstown, near to or in which my father had such a close race for his life by the savages lying in ambush.

You will find by examination of the county records that my father, though too modest to mention it, donated to the county the public square as long as it was used for the county seat. DON'T LET IT BE MOVED.

Very Respt'y yours,

A. Ketcham.

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Thursday March 9, 1893.

## Early History of Jackson County

Fifty years ago the name of John Ketcham was as "familiar in the mouths" of the residents of our county "as household words"; for he was then remembered as one of its earliest settlers, a fearless man whom neither wild beast nor savage could keep back from the extremest confines of civilization; but chiefly was he known and remembered as the person who had entered from the Government, and in 1816 had conveyed to the coun-



ty the land on which its county-seat was located. Until recently we had well nigh despaired on ever arriving at a knowledge of his personal history, and especially that portion of it was connected with our county. What we wanted to know was, when did he come to the county and where from; how long did he remain here; what adventures, if any, did he encounter during his stay; and what did he know of the Indian depredations and killings of these far off times. But all this, and much more than we had hoped for, is now in our possession through the medium of the pamphlet sent us by his son, to which, reference was made in a recent letter of his in The Banner. Your readers will not tire, I am sure with such relations of its contents as I shall, through your kindness, lay before them from time to time. I shall preface, however, what is to be said of the son by a brief sketch of the father which will serve to show that he came of good, sturdy, heroic stock.

Daniel Ketcham,

the father of John, emigrated with his family from Washington County, Md. and settled near Boon's Station, Shelby Co., in May, 1784. Louisville, the point at which they launched from a flat boat, had then but one house and it a block house. Their location was 45 miles east of this; and no less than three men were killed on their farm by the Indians in the course of a few years, and twice they had to seek the protection of the Station from the savages, some six miles distant. In 1792, in his flight from a party of eleven Tawa Indians, his horse was shot under him, and after running a short distance he was overtaken by one of them with brandished tomahawk, who graciously received his proffered hand. The savages at once made a hasty retreat with their plunder and captive; crossed the Ohio at Madison, Ind., and after a stop of several weeks on one of the Miami Rivers, finally reached their village not far, as supposed, from Detroit. Soon after their arrival he was taken through the process necessary to change him from pale-face to Indian for he was to become the adopted son of some widowed mother, who had lost her son. First he was buffeted with blows of the fist from one savage and then another till

pretty well used up. Then after a lapse of a few days, he was blackened, and in a looking glass permitted to take a last look at himself as a pale-face; after which he was tied to a stake as if for burning, in which condition he was addressed in an animated 30 minutes harangue by the chief's daughter, arrayed in gorgeous attire bedecked with 500 silver brooches. Then released and led into the river by two Indian women, who by dint of vigorous rubbing and washing, restored his normal color, and at the same time, as fondly supposed, washed the white man's blood out of his veins. This done he was conducted by them to their tent and formally presented to his future "mamma" whom they found seated in state awaiting his arrival. In the kindness of her motherly heart, softened for the occasion by liberal potations of whisky, she graciously extended her hand for welcome; but in the effort, lost her balance and tumbled sprawling upon the ground in a state of helpless drunkenness. And thus was white man made Indian.

The duties of the adopted son was the drudgery that is the hard lot of all Indian women; revolting of course to his better nature, and to be terminated at the earliest favorable opportunity. So after several months of toilsome servitude he escaped from his hard taskmaster, and after several "hair breadth escapes", aided now and then by French settlers, he finally reached Detroit, and after a brief stay at that place, he found his way to his old home in Md., and from there to his new home and family in Ky.

His devoutly religious Methodist wife, strong in the belief that he would be restored to his family, had never ceased to offer prayer to that end. And her prophesy to the neighbors that he would be back in time to stack their grain, an art in which he had acquired great proficiency in his native state, was fulfilled; for when the harvest was ended and the grain ready for storage, suddenly, to the great joy of all he made his appearance and soon after the little crops of golden sheaves found their way, under his skillful hands into storm-defying stacks, for they had no barns.

The biographer, Rev. T. M. Hopkins, formerly of Bloomington, Ind., and pastor of Mr. John Ketcham at the time of his death, to whom we are indebted, through his pamphlet, for the information contained in this sketch, does not give the date of the father or mother's death; but closes his account of them with the remark that, "With such parentage," we can understand why John Ketcham would be so energetic and resolute as the following history of his own difficulties with the Indians, written by himself, shows him to have been.

This sketch was written late in his life, but contains, no doubt, as accurate statements as if it had been composed immediately after the occurrence of the events noticed. It is given in his own language and characteristic style.

Mr. Editor, with this quotation I close the present article. In my next and perhaps three or four succeeding articles I shall give Mr. Ketcham's account of himself and the stirring events that occurred during the several years of his residence in our county; and all as given under his own hand and pen.

Very respectfully,  
John H. Benton.

Washington, D. C.,  
March 3, 1893.

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Thursday March 16, 1893.

**Early History of Jackson County**  
By John H. Benton

A brief sketch of Col. Ketcham's personal history preliminary to his reminiscences of our county while the Indian was still abroad in the land, will of course be read with interest.

Col. John Ketcham was born in Washington county, Md., September 10, 1782. In May 1784, his father and family settled in Shelby county, Ky., the future family home. In 1802 he was married to Miss Elizabeth Percy; and in April, 1811, they moved to Indiana, and settled near the present site of Brownstown, where he established a trading post with the Indians. A fort bearing his name was built on or near the spot where the

Asher Woodmansee house now stands, and was occupied by his son and a few other families during the memorable years 1812 and 1813. In June of the latter year he enlisted as a mounted ranger in the U. S. Service, and "served two whole years." In 1816 he conveyed to the county the "tract of land"—150 acres, at \$8 per acre, on which its "seat of justice" was officially located on May 16th, of that year. In 1818, he removed to Monroe county, and in the fall of that year to the farm that thenceforth till the day of his death, February 7th, 1865, at the age of 82 years and five months, was his home. The wife of his early manhood, and nine out of their twelve children, survived him. His son speaking of him says, "He had no sense of fear; was kind even to a fault, and hated a mean action;" and his pastor, in his funeral discourse, that he was "a good peacemaker," an affectionate husband an indulgent and kind father, a generous neighbor, a loyal and true citizen. The pastor relates that in his latter years, "it was his custom to spend much time in the study of the Bible;" and though residing some distance from the church, he made it a point to be there on "fair days and communion Sabbath"; and that his Sabbath evenings were spent in hearing his son read a sermon to the assembled family, and in hearing them sing his own and their favorite hymns.

He held from time to time a number of public positions, a colonelcy in the State militia, and associate judgeship of his county, and its representative some two or three times in the State legislature, and, an honor that seemed to please him most, one of Gen. Jackson's electors. In politics he was we suppose, a democrat; and in religion, we suppose, his mother's denomination was likewise his, a Methodist.

Very Respectfully,  
John H. Benton.

Col. John Ketcham

"I propose to give a short history of our Indian troubles of 1812-1813, in that part of the Indian Territory commonly called the "Forks," sit-



uated between the Muscackituck and the Drift-  
~~wood fork of White river, called by the Indians~~  
~~Han-gone-hak-quá se poo.~~ In April, 1811, we  
settled on Section 14, Township 5n, Range 4, east.  
Said section was made fractional by the Indian  
boundary line cutting off the n. w. corner. The  
Indians were numerous and friendly in that part  
of the territory until after the Tippecanoe battle,  
which took place Nov. 7th, 1811. The Delaware  
tribe expressed disapprobation of the battle, and  
many Indians left our part of the territory then,  
but not all.

#### Hinton The First Victim

"We enjoyed peace, but not without fear, April 7, 1812. About two and a half miles above our location there lived three families together—Hinton, Cox and Ruddick. Their horses grazed in what was called the Cherry bottom, five or six miles above. Hinton started in the morning to get a horse for some purpose, but not returning that day his friends went in search of him, and ascertained that their horses were all stolen, and that Hinton was murdered or a prisoner. The circumstance being made known to our neighborhood, we all went in search of the missing man. When we arrived at the Cherry bottom, two men were sent to examine the river shore, the balance were so divided as to sweep the bottom on through. He was found shot through the head, stripped and thrown into the river. We laid him on a blanket, tied the corners over a pole and started for home. Night overtaking us, we cut forks and raised the corpse out of the reach of wolves. A proposition was then made to John Ketcham and Noah Wright that if Ketcham would write a letter, and Wright take it to the Governor, then at Charlestown, they should be exempt from helping to bring in and bury the dead—agreed to".

#### Indians At Ketcham's Home

"Next morning (Sunday) about ten o'clock myself and family were shut up in the house. I was lying on a pallet before the fire when suddenly, without speaking, three Indians, each having a gun, pushed open the door and came in. I re-

quested them to take seats; they placed their guns in the corner and took seats. I took occasion to examine their guns, and found them primed and loaded. It was not common when the Indians called on the whites to have any guns with them. Sometimes they had one, but not loaded. They could speak pretty good English. I asked them, "what news?" They answered "None." I told them of the murder of Hinton and horses stolen. They then observed that three days past seven Winnebago Indians passed their camp going toward Cherry bottom. I then let them know that we had sent a man to tell the Governor what was done, and in a little time he would send men to hunt up the bad Indians, etc. I asked them if they would go with me to the burying, they consented. My wife objected to my going with them and wept. The oldest sympathized with her and shed tears too. We started, I leading the way. We had proceeded near a mile, they stopped, said "We no go, make white man heap mad;" so we returned, but found nobody at the house. My wife and children had secreted themselves in the bushes, supposing they would kill me, and return and kill them and plunder the house. The conduct of the three Indians was very suspicious. They had brought skins to trade with me but had hid them some distance from the house, saying nothing about them until after our return. Just as we returned, McColough, who had a squaw to wife, and another white man happened to come. Mc. told them if they didn't leave immediately 'every devil of them should be killed.' They returned to their camp, and left in great haste, leaving some of their valuables. They were the last camp of Indians that left our frontier that season.

#### The Kickapoos Killed Hinton.

In about ten days after, the Indian agent, residing at the Delaware town, sent two Indians, Salt Peter and Peter Vanvacter, with a letter and white flag, stating that it was not the Delawares who had done the mischief, but the Kickapoos, who had passed through their town with the stolen horses. The two messengers remained with the Whites many weeks. Peter Vanvacter hired

to work and never returned was murdered in Kentucky by some unprincipled white man, because he was an Indian.

"A man was killed near Widow Solida's, a few miles from Muscackituck,—his name not now recollected. Another man was killed on White river at McCowen's ferry.

### **The Settlers Build Forts**

"At the commencement of our Indian troubles there were upwards of seventy families living in the Forks, but in a few weeks after Hinton's murder upwards of fifty families left the country, and some for safety crossed the Ohio river. The balance, fifteen or eighteen families, determined not to leave, and built block-houses and forts. John Sage and others built a fort at his place, but the principal fort was at Vallonia, Huff's fort higher up, and Ketcham's fort still above and outside. We all lived in forts, went in companies to work our little improvements; some stood sentinel while others worked, and thus we got along for awhile.

### **Reinforced—Harrison and Clark**

"The good people of Harrison and Clark counties, considering the small number left in the Forks, and they shut up in forts, could not hold out long. The most good they (The Jackson county settlers) seemed to do was to be a kind of Indian bait for the safety of the interior (their) counties, who probably taking that view of the subject, reinforced us by sending company after company to help us maintain our stand. The Indians began to understand by our preparations that we would sooner fight a little than quit our location, although very few that remained during the war were owners of land, many having settled over the boundary line, where the land did not come into market for several years after.

### **The Pigeon Roost Massacre**

"About the time that Fort Harrison (near Terre Haute) and Fort Wayne were besieged by the Indians, namely, the 4th of September,

1812, a marauding party of Indians, who passed north of our forts, fell on the unguarded and unsuspecting neighborhood of Pigeon Roost, (near Scottsville) killing twenty three men, women and children, mostly women and children. After robbing the houses they set fire to them, and stole horses to carry off their booty. About the same time Major Duvall, of Salem, with a small company of men, made a scout up White river, and it so happened that while they were passing over some fallen timber on Sand Creek, that they come in contact with the Indians on their return from the Pigeon Roost. Those of them who had horses threw off their large packs and made good their retreat.

#### John Zink Mortally Wounded

"Two others who had no horses fled in another direction, pursued by the men. John Zink, one of the party, being young and athletic, outran his comrades, and when the Indians discovered that they were separated, they devised a plan to shoot Zink. In crossing a ravine one Indian secreted himself, while the other showed himself in plain view within shooting distance. Zink stopped to shoot, but the secreted Indian fired first, giving him a mortal wound. Zink lay in his gore that rainy night, and was found by his companions next morning still alive, and brought to Ketcham's fort, where he was washed and comfortably clothed and Dr. Lamb, of Salem sent for. The doctor arrived, drew a silk handkerchief through the wound, and started home. Zink died before they reached Vallonia. The three large packs were opened, and found to consist of men, women and children's clothing. We knew then some settlement had been destroyed, but at the time we knew not what one.

#### Buskirk and Sturgeon Killed

"About the last of September, 1812, Absalom Buskirk and brother-in-law took a two horse team to his field to get some corn and pumpkins. The Indians killed Buskirk and stole his two fine horses. The corpse was brought into



Ketcham's fort the same evening, and the next morning John Johnston, Robert Sturgeon and others came and hauled the corpse to Huff's fort for interment, after which Sturgeon started home, and was killed at the Half-mile branch, near Vallonia. Although there were at Vallonia a number of militiamen stationed, they were unwilling to risk their own scalps, and refused to go for the dead. After night the citizens, namely, Craigs, Roger, Beems, etc., went with their dogs and brought the corpse to the fort.

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Thursday, March 23, 1893

### Early History of Jackson County

By John H. Benton

"After the murder of Buskirk and Sturgeon, no other persons were killed during the fall and winter following but many alarms were given and horses stolen. I will insert a few cases.

One night Daniel Stout, who now lives near Bloomington, and others were at Ketcham's fort. After their sentinels were placed out in different directions round the fort, two heard and a third saw two Indians and fired at them, and then fled to the fort, expecting next morning to find a dead Indian, or a trail of blood, but a hard rain had fell that night, and we found no Indian or blood.

At another time, about corn gathering, Capt. Hiram Boone, with twelve or fifteen men, were at Ketcham's fort. They tied their horses to stakes driven into the ground in the yard, not far from the fort. A large poplar stump stood rather between the two of the houses, not more than five steps from either. In that stump holes were bored and hooks driven in and four or five horses fastened to them. The night was clear, but the moon did not rise until after night. While it was yet dark the Indians opened the yard fence into the corn field, and let down one bar on another square of the yard fence. The bars were within twelve or fifteen steps of the big stump. An Indian slipped through the bars, and got to the horses undis-

covered, but while loosing his choice horse—a fine gelding, one of the guard fired at him, but he clung to the horse. Another guard fired on him, but he led the horse off through the gap, into the corn field. By this time, Captain Boone and five or six of his men pursued the Indian having the horse. While the chase was going on, Ketcham was standing in the yard giving some directions, when an Indian secreted near the bars, not more than twenty steps distant, fired at him. Boone halted and asked who had shot. I replied, an Indian. One of his men said: "Captain let us tree." He replied, "We don't know on what side of the tree to get. We will return to the fort." The party was composed of about sixteen Indians. We counted their trail next morning through a newly cut buckwheat patch, and at that time discovered what their policy had been. On each side of the gap opening into the corn field there was placed a strong guard, also on each side of the bars. If an Indian had been closely pursued in either direction, the guard would have shot down his pursuers.

Although it was believed that the Indians were continually prowling about some of the forts, the people got so hardened to danger that they seemed not to dread their enemy. One night Mr. Hutcherson and family, together with some of the militia-men, concluded to stay at his house, a short distance from Huff's fort. They felt safe and happy, and having a fiddle, concluded to have a dance, and enjoy themselves first-rate, but in the morning when they awoke they found that their horses were all gone. While they were dancing the Indians were catching their horses. Pursuit was made, and after following their trail a few miles, they met David Sturgeon's old, ugly horse coming back with a leather tug tied so tightly around his throat that he could scarcely draw his breath. They did this probably, to show their contempt for the white man's old, ugly horse. They recovered no more horses.

#### A Fruitless Pursuit.

Along after that time the Indians stole two horses from Flinn's settlement. They were pursued by General Tipton, David and James Rogers,

and others, who followed them for several days, when they found they were close on them, the water being muddy in their tracts. Tipton's plan was to follow them closely and cautiously till night, then have fine sport tomahawking them. But his spies, Major Sparks and Mr. ...., (Presumably John Ketcham) disobeyed orders. The Indians had halted over the turn of a hill dressing the horses' manes and tails. The Major and..... got within thirty or forty steps of the Indians before they discovered them. The temptation was too great; they fired, but missed. When Tipton came up and saw what was done, he cried like a child, and was tempted to tomahawk the Major. Their provisions were exhausted and they far from home. The rain had swelled the creeks until they were past fording. Those who could swim had to do so. They came to a large creek in the north end of Monroe county. A man by the name of Bean Blossom, in attempting to swim the creek, came very near drowning, and Tipton named the creek Bean Blossom after his name, and so it is called to this day.

At another time Gen. Tipton and Captain Beem, with perhaps twenty men, made a scout to the west fork of White river. Before they got to the river they crossed a beautiful stream that empties into Bean Blossom near its mouth. A man by the name of Jack Storm, and another man named John Ketcham, in crossing a stream, got both of their horses mired and stuck in the mud. They then named the creek Jack's Defeat, and so it is called to this day.

#### **Another Discent On The Pigeon Roost And Capture Of The Huffman Boy**

No disturbance was made in the winter of 1812. Perhaps the Indians thought they might be tracked in the snow. In March, 1813, they commenced again fiercer than ever. They made another descent on the Pigeon Roost country, killing old Mr. Huffman, wounding his wife and daughter, and taking his grandson, a small boy, son of Benjamin Huffman, prisoners. On their return, they divided their company. One party stole Reed's horses the other party went eight or ten miles

from Reed's and stole Kimberlin's horses, and the same night made good their retreat. After the war was over, Benjamin Huffman went North, perhaps to Detroit, in search of his lost son. He heard that his son had been sold to a Frenchman living in Canada. Huffman was poor; his means exhausted, he returned home discouraged, despairing of never seeing his child again. Our kind and benevolent representative in Congress, Jonathan Jennings, got an appropriation made to enable Huffman to seek further his son. He hired a man to go with him, they went down the St. Lawrence into Canada and found his son. The child was so young when stolen, and had been gone so long, that he had forgotten his father's name. He recollected that he was called Ben, but had forgotten the balance of the name.

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Thursday, March 30, 1893

### Early History of Jackson County

By John H. Benton

#### Gurhrie Killed—Flinn Captured

In the spring of 1813, the Pottawotamies made a descent on Flinn's Settlement, now Leesville, killed Mr. Guthrie and took Martin Flinn prisoner. He remained a prisoner with them till the fall of 1814. At that time a young warrior crossed the Tippecanoe river in a splendid canoe, on a courting expedition, and while enjoying himself with his beloved one, Flinn gathered his ax, which they had stolen when they captured him, and a few ears of corn, and quietly stepped into the lover's canoe not asking any questions for conscience sake', and with his beautiful paddle rowed himself down stream all night. He secreted himself in day time, and in this way spent several days and nights before he landed at Fort Harrison (near Terre Haute). When he landed, he was unable to get out of the canoe. He was helped out and cared for, and in a few days considered himself able to travel home. The rangers, then at the fort and others, made up a pony purse, and bought him a horse to ride home on. In a few days he was able to ride, and carried his lost ax home.



Oh! then, the happy meeting of friends and relatives.

#### George Doom Killed And John Ketcham Wounded

"About the middle of March, 1813, John Ketcham and Geo. Doom, a militiaman from Harrison county, then on duty, went on an errand to Johnson Lindsey's,—Lindsey having during the winter of 1812 removed from Ketcham's fort to his farm some miles above. On their return home they were waylaid and fired on by the Indians. Doom was killed, and Ketcham badly wounded with two balls. When he reached the fort a messenger was sent to Vallonia for a reinforcement. About twenty men under command of Lieutenant . . . . ., proceeded to where Doom's corpse lay; after carrying it to Lindsey's, William Ruddick, John Samuel and Frederick Tunk were detailed to bury the dead, and remained at Lindsey's till next morning. The scout proceeded up the country for miles without making any discovery of Indian signs, and returned home. The fatigue party having completed the burial, the sun yet an hour high, concluded that the Indians were all gone, and that they would return to the fort. They had proceeded about three hundred yards when the Indians, lying in ambush near their path, fired on them and wounded Ruddick and Samuel, then retreated.

#### The Fight At Tipton's Island

"Shortly after this General Tipton, Richard Beem, William Dyer and a number of militia-men from Harrison county, went on a scout up White river, some distance above Ketcham's fort, and struck a free Indian trail. They eagerly and cautiously pursued the same until they discovered that the Indians had crossed over on drift timber into an island. Tipton stood ready with his gun presented while Beem and others were crossing on the drifted logs. An Indian who was secreted, raised his gun to shoot Beem but Tipton touched trigger first. The Indian threw down his gun, it cocked, and retreated, badly wounded. He was supposed to be their leader. Tipton and his men all crossed over into the island, except Dyer, who had charge of Tipton's horse. Several shots were

exchanged between the parties. The whites got one scalp, and tracked several of the enemy by the blood to the water, where they attempted to swim. Dyer being below the island had a fair view of the river, and saw a number bulge into the water, with their blankets on. All sunk before they reached the opposite shore. It was believed that the whole party perished. This good licking caused the red-skins to treat us with more politeness. After General Tipton had handled our red brethren so roughly on Tipton's Island, so called, they were more cautious and sly toward us. No more of our neighbors were killed by them, but occasionally they would ride off a horse that was not their own.

#### Four Companies Of Rangers Raised.

"In the spring of 1813, the General government authorized the raising of four companies of mounted rangers to protect the Territorial frontier. Capt. Bigger's company was principally made up of citizens of Clark county, ten or twelve of whom had been shut up in block-houses and forts in the Forks for more than a year, making nothing. These concluded to join his company and make a business of hunting Indians, and guarding their own frontier, as in so doing they would get some pay for their services, otherwise they would not. The pay of a ranger was a dollar a day, each man "finding himself"; that is each man furnishing his own horse, arms, ammunition and provisions,—every man his own commissary.

"The soldiers became much attached to each other during their service, and the kindest feeling towards each other seems to have existed between them all, except David Barnes and Samuel Ridge, who often fought each other. They were too full of spirits,—very spirited men at times. Ensign Owen and Richard Lewis marred the good feelings of the comrades by desertion on the Peoria campaign. It was said by Daniel Williams and others, as an apology for them, they had caught the Kickadoo fever.

"But few of Captain Bigger's company are now living. For the gratification of the few survivors, I publish the muster roll, at the call of

which they so often answered. (As the roll contains the names of a number of persons well known to our older inhabitants, it will be published soon in the Banner).

### **The War Carried Into "Egypt."**

"After the four companies of Rangers were organized, it was thought best to carry the war into Egypt. Arrangements were made for a campaign against the Indians, composed of Rogers and a few volunteer militia. Capt. Dunn and Bigger with part of their companies, and some of Captain Payton's men, (of Kentucky) together with General Bartholomew and volunteer militia, were assigned to that duty. They rendezvoused at Vallonia about the middle of June, then proceeded under the command of General Bartholomew to the upper towns on the West Fork of White river. The towns had mostly been destroyed before we got there, probably by a company from the White Water settlement.

### **John Ketcham Kills An Indian, An Indian Mortally Wounds David Hays.**

"We then went down the river to towns not interrupted, and come to Strawtown (in Harrison county) late in the evening, and discovered fresh Indian signs. Early next morning General Bartholomew, Captain Dunn and Captain Shields, and about twenty rangers went in pursuit of the Indians. When we had proceeded about three-fourths of a mile we discovered three horses, we surrounded and secured them, two were hobbled. Following their back track, we came to their camp. General Bartholomew directed three mounted rangers, namely, Severe Lewis, David Hays and..... (John Ketcham) to keep in the rear, but at the fire of the first gun to dash forward. Captain Dunn went on the right under cover of the river bank, Captain Shields on the left, and General Bartholomew brought up the center division. The directions were to surround their camp and take them prisoners. The Indians had a large brass kettle hanging over the fire with three deer heads boiling, and were sitting near to the fire. Captain Shields slipped carefully through the

bushes, and when opposite the camp, at least one hundred yards distant, the Indians discovered us, jumped to their guns and fled. Shields fired his gun to notify the horsemen. One of Bigger's men (John Ketcham) immediately started in pursuit, ran two or three hundred yards when he got into the path the Indians had run on. He was within thirty steps of his game, and shot down the Indian. The other horseman soon made up, but the other Indian was just out of sight. They were directed (by Ketcham) to where he was last seen. Hays got separated from the other two horsemen, and unfortunately met with the secreted Indian, who gave him a mortal wound. The horses and brass kettle were sold to the highest bidder and a credit and the notes were given to Hays. His wounds were dressed by David Maxwell. He was carried on a horse-litter to the mouth of Flat Rock, near Columbus where we made two canoes and sent him and a guard by water to Vallonia, where his wife and family were. He died in two or three days after they reached the fort.

Muster Roll, of a Company of U. S. Mounted Rangers, Commanded by Captain James Bigger.

#### Commissioned Officers:

Captain, James Bigger,  
1st Lieutenant, John Carr,  
2nd Lieutenant, James Curry,  
3rd Lieutenant, Wm. Meradith,  
Ensign, Jack Owens,

#### Non-Commissioned Officers.

1st Serg't, John Ketcham,  
2nd Serg't, Josiah Williams,  
3rd Serg't, Wm. E. L. Collins,  
4th Serg't, Jonathan Watkins,  
5th Serg't, John Herrod,  
1st Corp., Basil Bowen,  
2nd Corp., William Patrick,  
3rd Corp., Samuel Herron,  
4th Corp., Robert Wardle,  
5th Corp., Andrew B. Holland,  
6th Corp., Jonathan Gibbons,



Privates—Moss Allen, James Allison, Martin Adams, George Armstrong, Luther Beadle, Thomas Bernen, John Baldwin, John Blair, John Bartholomew, David Barnes, George Bratton, Michael Beem, John Cosner, John Cover, James Cowen, Isaiah Cooper, James Collins, John Cloak, John Clark, Isaac Clark, John R. Clark, John Craig, Stephen Dunlap, Moses Dunlap, John Dunlap, Robert Evans, John Evans, Wm. N. Griffith, William Gainer, John Gibson, John Gibson, James Hay, John D. Hay, William Hiler, Aaron Holeman, Philip Hart, Isaac D. Huffman, James Herrod, Benjamin Noble, Lewis Hankins, Efram Hutchins, Robert Jones, Jonathan Johnson, Lewis Ketcham, Arbaham Kelly, William Kelly, Thomas F. Kelly, James S. Kelly, David Kelly, William Lindsey, Richard Lewis, John May, John McNaught, John McNight, Harvey Owen, George W. Owen, Jeremiah Pierceall, Adam Peck, Henry Pearey, Robert Pearey, Andrew Perry, Charles F. Ross, George Ross, James Ross, Hugh Ross, John Reed, Thomas Ryan, James Rodgers, Issac Rodgers, Lewis Rodgers, Samuel Ridge, Thomas Rose, Stephen Shipman, Wm. Stewart, Robert Swany, John Sage, George Ulmer, Reece Williams, Daniel Williams, Thomas Weathers, Martin Wilson, James Wilson. NEW RECRUITS—Lewis Cutting, John Flint, Samuel Haslett, . . . . . Jenkins, Levi Nugent, James Mooney, John Milton, Joseph Rawlins, David Studabaker, John Storm, John Sands, James Sands, Elam Whittey.

THE END.

